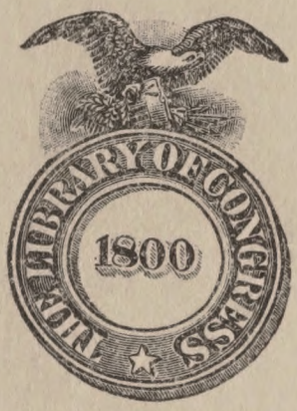
THE TRAIL *of the* WHITE INDIANS

By

A. HYATT VERRILL



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THE TRAIL OF THE WHITE INDIANS

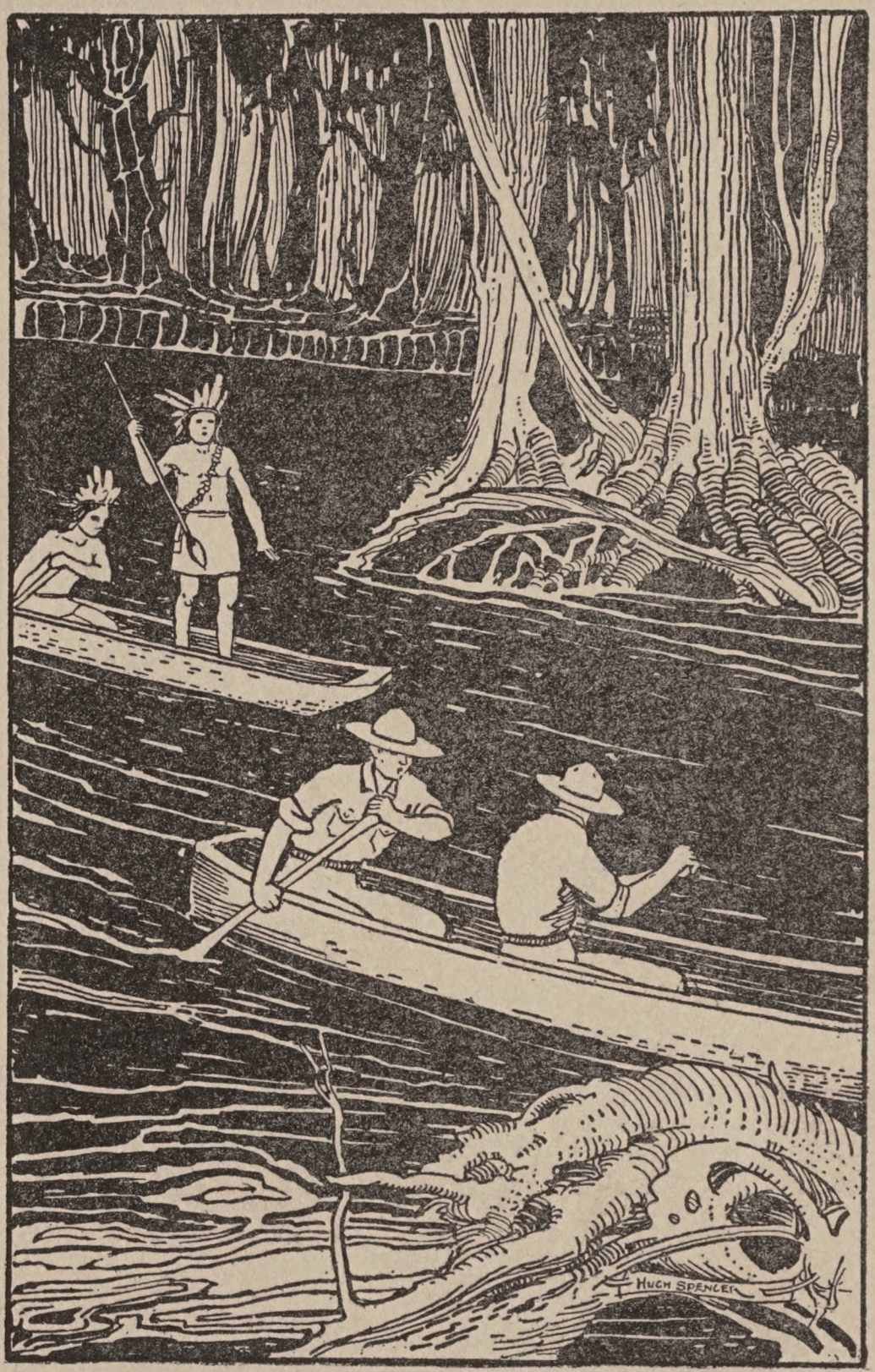
BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE TRAIL OF THE CLOVEN FOOT

ILLUSTRATED BY
HUGH SPENCER

To which the present volume is the sequel

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY



ONE RAISED HIS JAVELIN, AS IF ABOUT TO HURL IT AT THE COWERING LADS

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THE TRAIL of the WHITE INDIANS

Sequel to
The Trail of the Cloven Foot

By A. Hyatt Verrill

Illustrated by
Hugh Spencer

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
NEW YORK

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THE TRAIL OF THE WHITE INDIANS

CHAPTER I

AN UNEXPECTED VISIT

WITH the farewell roar of her whistle drowning the lusty shouts of a troop of Boy Scouts upon the pier, the steamship backed slowly from the big iron dock at Cristobal and into the smooth waters of the harbor. Then, swinging majestically, she headed for the narrow opening between the huge breakwaters and the Caribbean Sea beyond.

Leaning upon the rail of the awning-shaded deck, two boys gazed steadfastly shoreward as the docks and shipping blended in a confused mass astern and the big Hotel Washington merged with the background of the palms and buildings of Colon, while, beyond all, loomed the hazy, green

mountains with the interminable jungle sweeping inland from the palm-fringed shores for countless miles ahead.

"I'll bet the rest of the Troop would like to be along!" exclaimed one of the boys as the ship swung eastward and the town dropped from sight beyond a jutting point.

"I wish they were," replied the other. "Didn't we have a fine time together on the Gold Road?"

"Yes, and there's old Porto Bello now!" exclaimed the first speaker, pointing to a wooded bluff rising boldly from the sea a few miles distant. "Do you recognize it, Rob?"

"Aye, Fred," replied his friend, "I can see yon fort where all our adventures began."

"And haven't we had a lot since we first landed over there?" cried the other.

"And I'm thinking we'll have a lot more," declared Rob.

"Well, we won't find another lost mine, that's certain," laughed Fred.

"Dinna ye be too sure," remarked Rob, with true Scotch caution. "Had a body told us we'd find Tisingal when we first stepped ashore at Porto Bello yonder we'd have laughed at the idea, man. Hoot, laddie! but 'tis all so like a story I canna believe 'tis true."

"You're right," admitted Fred. "I haven't even begun to realize it's really happened myself."

It was really little wonder that the two boys felt thus, for seldom have boys met with more exciting and remarkable adventures than had fallen to the lot of Fred Wilson and Rob MacGregor since their arrival on the Isthmus of Panama a few months previously.

Organizing a Boy Scout troop, they had gone on a camping trip up the ancient, paved, Spanish trail known as the "Gold Road" and here had met with mysterious adventures which resulted in their obtaining a fragment of an ancient map showing the way to the long lost and fabulously rich Tisingal mine. This, in itself, was enough to satisfy most boys, but Fate had decreed that Fred and Rob should meet with still more astounding experiences and, on a trip through Costa Rica in company with a scientist, Mr. Grayson, the party had been captured by savage Indians, had escaped and, by sheer luck, had stumbled upon the long-lost mines. Finding their way back to civilization, they learned that, in order to take over the mine, they must obtain certain papers from a man named Cabral and who, Mr. Grayson believed, was somewhere near Goajira in Colombia. It was to find this important personage that Mr. Wilson and Mr. Grayson had sailed from Colon with the two boys who were the owners of what was reputed to be the richest of all the old Spanish mines in the New World.

But if the boys could not yet grasp the fact of their wonderful discovery, they could realize that they were bound for new lands full of interest, strange sights and possible adventures, and as the mountains of Panama sank from sight below the horizon they talked of nothing but the future. Throughout the night the ship plowed smoothly across the Caribbean and when the boys came on deck next morning land was close ahead and the ship was steaming slowly towards an immensely long iron pier. Strings of freight cars stood upon the dock, several sailing ships and a rusty tramp lay alongside, and beyond stretched a rolling plain dotted with houses and a cluster of buildings, while towering to the clouds in the background rose vast, dull, parched-green mountains.

"Hello, boys! What do you think of Puerto Colombia?" inquired a cheery voice as Mr. Grayson approached.

"I don't think much of it," declared Fred. "It seems to be all pier and railway cars."

"Anyone would think there must be a city to see the dock," added Rob. "Why do they need such a huge pier for that little village yonder?"

"Bananas mostly," replied the scientist. "Puerto Colombia is a United Fruit Company port and there are enormous banana plantations back from the shore. The dock is said to be the longest iron

pier in the world but there really is quite a lot of other traffic here. The Magdalena River is just beyond and as all passengers and freight for Bogota and the interior must go up this stream the port is quite important."

"Does the Fruit Company own everything here?" asked Fred.

"Almost," replied Mr. Grayson. "It controls all the banana business in this part of the world as well as a large part of all other industries and the transportation systems. No doubt it's done a great deal to benefit these countries, but it also has throttled all competition and has prevented progress, save for its own benefit."

"Well, it can have this place and welcome as far as I'm concerned," laughed Fred. "It doesn't even look interesting enough to make me wish to go ashore."

"It would scarcely be worth while," admitted Mr. Grayson. "It's a hot, uninteresting spot and we only remain here an hour or two."

The ship was now alongside the pier, and crowds of negroes, mestizos, Indians and colored folk appeared as if by magic. Several of the men carried burlap bags upon their shoulders and setting these down they proceeded to draw forth parrots, monkeys, fruit and Panama hats. The monkeys chattered and scrambled about, seeking shelter from the sun under cars, trucks and timbers; the

parrots screamed and squawked and the people yelled, gabbled and shouted until everywhere was confusion, noise and clamor. The boys watched the strange scene with interest, amused at the antics of the monkeys and laughing at the apparent excitement of the people over nothing and wondering how the pedlers of hats and pets distinguished their own property from that of their fellows, as parrots, hats and monkeys seemed hopelessly confused and mixed, for everyone was so intent upon the arrival of the steamer that they left their charges to look out for themselves. When a big green parrot proceeded to tear to bits a heap of Panama hats and a mischievous white-faced monkey made a raid on a tray of fruit belonging to a fat negress the boys roared with laughter. A shrill shriek from the negress drew the attention of the hat seller and as he leaped towards the parrot the black woman lurched ponderously after the monkey, with the result, that man and woman collided and rolled yelling, cursing and screaming over hats, fruit and parrots. Instantly everything was confusion; people rushed forward from every side, the frightened parrots fluttered and filled the air with their harsh cries, a monkey, breaking loose from its cord, scrambled across the negress's face causing her to emit heart-rending shrieks and at this instant a small black pig escaped from its owner and, squealing, dashed

through the crowd upsetting men, women and children until the spot was a mass of squirming, writhing black, brown and yellow legs, ragged garments and squawking parrots.

"Oh, *wasn't* that rich!" cried Fred, his face red with laughter. "To see that old mammy rolling among the hats and the way she yelled when the monkey ran across her face!"

"Aye, and the way they all went down like ninepins when yon pig ran among them!" exclaimed Rob. "Wouldn't it have made a dandy motion picture, though?"

The breakfast gong interrupted the comedy and before the meal was over the ship had slipped from the pier and was again headed for the open sea and Cartagena.

The boys had read a great deal regarding this historical old town and looked forward with intense interest to a stay there, and from the moment the ship turned shoreward and as the hills and mountains grew steadily more distinct, they watched with eager eyes for the first sight of the famous city.

But when at last it did loom above the trees they were puzzled, for there appeared to be no harbor, the roofs and towers with their bright hues and red tiles seemingly far back among the greenery.

Mr. Wilson explained that the city was built on

the shores of an almost landlocked harbor, or lagoon, some distance from the sea and that the narrow, crooked entrance was concealed by brush and trees on the sand-pits which projected on either hand.

While he was speaking, the entrance came into view, a little pilot-boat came dancing across the waves and a few moments later the big ship steamed slowly along the tortuous channel. On one hand the boys caught sight of a half-ruined old fort commanding the harbor mouth.

"I'll bet that's the same fort that gave Morgan and Drake such a lot of trouble!" exclaimed Fred.

"Right you are," declared Mr. Wilson. "But there are other and far larger forts beyond. In the old Spanish days Cartagena was one of the best fortified towns in the world. Even the British under Vernon had a long hard fight to take it. By the way, did you know that George Washington's brother took part in that battle?"

"Then I suppose Mt. Vernon must have been named after the commander," said Rob.

"Exactly," agreed Mr. Wilson. "George Washington himself fought under Vernon. Ah; here's the town, boys. It's far prettier from here than after one steps ashore; but you'll find it very interesting, nevertheless."

For the three days they were in this ancient stronghold of Spain's former greatness the boys

found plenty to occupy their time. They visited the old forts, explored the catacombs under the city, took trips to the surrounding villages and were immensely interested with the implements of torture once used by the inquisition and although the rack was serving the more useful purpose of a window-grating, it lost none of its interest thereby.

Meanwhile Mr. Wilson and Mr. Grayson were busily engaged with chartering a schooner to take them to Rio Hacha and in purchasing supplies and provisions for the trip to the little-known districts about Goajira.

Numerous inquiries had been made as to Cabral's whereabouts, but with little success. Several people knew of him and one or two declared that he had gone to Venezuela, but by sheer good luck the captain of the little schooner which they engaged had met Cabral at Rio Hacha on his last trip.

The boys were elated at this news, for it now seemed certain that they could find Cabral, and they were in high spirits when at last all was ready and they boarded the schooner and sailed forth from Cartagena. The little vessel left the harbor by a different entrance from that through which the steamer had come and Mr. Wilson told the boys that this was the channel which the Spaniards closed by chains at the time of the bucca-

neers' attack on the city. "It proved a sort of boomerang, however," he said, "for the Spaniards' ships were thus bottled up in the harbor and became an easy prey for the invaders. The chains were never removed and the entrance has become impassable for large vessels."

There was a fresh trade wind blowing outside the harbor and, heading eastward, the schooner heeled to the breeze and with all sail set tore through the blue sea like a racing yacht. The boys hunted up some fishing lines and amused themselves by trolling and were rewarded by securing two fine bonitos and several Spanish mackerel.

As they were intent on their fishing, they were startled by a terror-stricken yell from the captain and turned in time to see him drop the tiller and leap down the companion-way, while those of the crew in sight disappeared as if by magic. Instantly, the schooner yawed and swung up into the wind with a tremendous flapping of canvas and rattling of blocks and ropes.

"What in the ——," commenced Fred and then stopped with gaping mouth and unbelieving eyes staring at a large, dull-gray object slowly rising from the sea not two hundred yards from the schooner.

"Hoot, mon, 'tis a submarine!" cried Rob.

"By Jove, it is!" exclaimed Mr. Wilson.

"And a whopping big one!" added the scientist.

"Is she a German?" asked Fred, finding his voice at last.

"I can't make out her colors," replied his father. "The flag is so stained and wet; but I don't think she's a Hun boat."

By now the submarine was in plain view, and, as Mr. Wilson spoke, a man emerged from a hatch; an ugly-looking gun reared itself above the deck and the sailor swung the muzzle of the weapon towards the schooner.

"Look out, he's going to fire on us!" cried Fred in frightened tones.

But at that moment an officer appeared and holding a megaphone to his lips hailed those on the schooner.

"Ahoy, aboard the schooner!" he cried and the boys breathed more freely at the sound of the English words. "What ship is that, where are you from and where bound?" demanded the officer.

"I guess it's up to us to reply," remarked Mr. Wilson. "The crew and skipper seem to have made themselves scarce."

Cupping his palms and standing by the rail he shouted back, "Schooner Maria Teresa, from Cartagena for Rio Hacha." But evidently his words were indistinguishable, for the officer shook his head and, turning to the conning-tower, gave an

order and the next instant the submarine swung as on a pivot and slipped forwards toward the schooner, and as she did so, the bedraggled ensign blew out and displayed the Stars and Stripes.

"Hurrah, she's American!" cried Fred in relieved tones.

"Hoot, mon! didna ye ken it lang ago when yon leftenant spoke?" said Rob.

The submarine was now within easy speaking distance and Mr. Wilson again replied to the officer's hail.

"You're Americans, aren't you?" queried the lieutenant as Mr. Wilson finished speaking.

"Three of us," answered Mr. Grayson. "What are you chaps doing over here?" Then, with a laugh, he added, "You boys should get a new flag. We thought you were Huns and came pretty near blowing you out of water."

"What with?" laughingly inquired the officer.

The scientist ducked down the companion-way and returned with a .22-caliber rifle. "With that," he replied, and all joined in the hearty laugh which followed.

"I'd like to have a chat with you fellows," cried the lieutenant. "Can't you come alongside in your small boat?"

By this time the captain and crew, finding they were not to be sunk, had recovered from their terror and had reappeared on deck and Mr. Wilson

ordered the small boat lowered and manned and, accompanied by Mr. Grayson and the boys rowed to the submarine.

The boys were filled with interest and excitement at thus boarding an underseas boat and were in hopes of being invited below; but in this they were disappointed, for the commander of the submarine kept them standing on deck during the conference.

"We're down here looking for a Hun base," he explained after the first greetings and introductions were over. "There are U-boats off the Atlantic coast," he continued, "and we've reason to think they have a base on some unfrequented bit of coast down here."

"There *are* plenty of places for that," agreed Mr. Grayson. "But it would require a good sized fleet and a mighty close search to look over the whole Colombian coast."

"That's just the trouble," complained the officer. "Our people seem to think all we have to do is to loaf along here and let the Huns come out and tell where to look. You can't make 'em see that there's a couple of thousand miles of coast all cut up into natural harbors and bays and inlets and rivers and creeks, anyone of which would shelter a battle-squadron without anyone seeing it a dozen miles off."

"Regular needle in a haystack proposition, eh?"

remarked Mr. Wilson. "Can't the natives give you any information?"

"They can, but they won't," declared the lieutenant. "They're all pro-Germans, or rather anti-Americans, in Colombia. But I can't blame 'em for that; we grabbed Panama away from them and the Dutchmen have always furnished them with all their business and money. Besides, the Huns own a lot of property along this coast and don't let anyone land on it if they know it. But you gentlemen might help us a lot. You're bound for a little-known part of the country and you might see or hear something mighty useful to us."

"We'll be more than glad to report anything we find out," Mr. Wilson assured him. "But how can we communicate it?"

The officer considered for a moment. "I have it!" he exclaimed at last. "The 'Rogers' is over here somewhere,—she's a fast destroyer, you know,—and we're to meet her tomorrow for orders. I'll tell Benson about you and ask him to keep an eye on the Goajira coast for the next two or three weeks. If you want to communicate, just light three fires in a row at night, or make three smokes during the day,—that's part of your Boy Scout training, isn't it, boys?—and Benson'll know what it means and send a boat ashore. There may be nothing doing here, you know; but we've got a hunch that there's something funny going on

over beyond Rio Hacha and if you don't notice anything strange we'll give up and hunt somewhere else. Well, we must be off now. Mighty glad I met you all," and shaking hands all around, the commander of the submarine clambered back into the conning-tower; the rapid-fire gun sunk to its bed below the deck-plates and, ere the small boat had reached the schooner, only the slender periscope and its tiny wake marked the rapidly departing submarine.

"Won't it be jolly looking for a Hun base!" exclaimed Fred as they stepped aboard the schooner.

"Aye, we're real Scouts now," replied Rob. "Hoot, mon! dinna ye feel proud o' the reesponibeelity reposed in ye by your Uncle Samuel?"

Everyone laughed at Rob's serious tone and for a long time the conversation was all of the possibilities of the Germans having a submarine base in the vicinity.

"Do you really think there's a Hun base down here?" asked Fred. "I don't see how a place of that sort could be hidden so no one could find it."

"It's not at all impossible, nor even improbable," replied Mr. Grayson. "Most of the coast of Colombia and Venezuela is uninhabited and many miles of it are unexplored, while the tropical jungle would screen anything in the way of ships or buildings if they were a short distance up one of the streams or estuaries. For example, take the Goa-

jira peninsula which projects into the sea between Venezuela and Colombia. No one really knows anything about it. When the Spaniards discovered it the country was said to have been inhabited by a race of gigantic Indians who drove off the Europeans. No doubt the size of the natives was exaggerated as an excuse for being defeated so easily, but the fact remains that from that day to this no white man has ever been able to penetrate the peninsula. Expeditions which have attempted it have either disappeared or have been driven off with great loss of life. It is reputed to be a very rich country with much gold and this is borne out by the fact that the Indians near the coast occasionally come into Rio Hacha or Maracaibo and make purchases for which they pay in raw gold. There is also a persistent tale of a race of white Indians in the interior of Goajira."

"White Indians!" exclaimed Fred in surprise. "Why, that's what you called those that captured us in Costa Rica. Are they the same tribe?"

"Of course not," replied the scientist. "I called those fellows 'white'; but they were real Indians, I believe, while these down here are supposed to be really white; blondes, in fact. I believe the story to be true, as I actually have seen a few individuals of the race in Rio Hacha. But I don't believe they are Indians at all,—probably descendants of some European expedition which was cut off in the

jungle many years ago and who have managed to survive and keep their race pure. Their features and appearance are far more Caucasian than Indian."

"'Twould be a bonny spot to explore, I'm thinkin'," remarked Rob. "Mon, but think o' the adventures a body'd have."

"Plenty of excitement, I expect," laughed the scientist. "The Mogollones are said to have a playful custom of slicing off the soles of their captives' feet so they cannot run away. They are also supposed to be cannibals."

"I don't believe even a Mogollon could eat a Scotchman," laughed Fred. "But anyway, I *would* like to see those white Indians."

"So would I and many another scientist," said Mr. Grayson. "But so far, no man has ever reached their district, although plenty have tried. You may possibly see a few at Rio Hacha, however. Possibly too, Cabral can tell us something, —it was part of his plan to go into Goajira through the back door so to speak."

"I should think you two boys would have had enough of exploring and getting into trouble with Indians," remarked Mr. Wilson who had been listening to the conversation. "I shouldn't imagine all your experiences in Costa Rica were very enjoyable."

"Oh, we had a fine time," declared Fred. "Of

course we didn't enjoy it all the time; but looking back on it, 'twas a heap of fun."

"Dinna you think the green stones would help us with yon Mogollones?" queried Rob.

Mr. Grayson laughed. "I'm afraid not," he replied. "They were mighty useful in Costa Rica and Panama because the Indians there knew the snake-headed god and its significance. The Mogollones are a different race, however, and wouldn't care anything about the charms except to covet them as ornaments. No, boys, don't imagine we're going to try to get into Goajira. Sometime I intend to come back here with a properly equipped expedition and make the attempt; but I don't intend trying it by myself,—or even with the help of you two boys. Discretion is the better part of valor, you know, and I have need for the soles of my feet for some time yet."

"Well, if it's so dangerous how could the Germans have a base here?" demanded Fred, again returning to the original subject. "Wouldn't the Indians drive them off?"

"The Indians don't live on the coast," replied Mr. Grayson. "And if the Huns have a base here you may be sure it is well protected and fortified. If the Germans didn't attempt to go into the interior I don't think the Indians would molest them and you may be sure the Huns would not go far from their base. The quieter they keep and the

less they let their presence be known the better for them. However, I really doubt if there *is* any such base. There are all sorts of rumors afloat and this is probably one of them."

"Well, I hope there is and that we find it," declared Fred. "Wouldn't it be a fine thing to tell the boys when we go back to Colon?"

"And old Capt'n Jack, too," added Rob.

"Remember, you must first catch your hare before you cook him," admonished Mr. Wilson.

"And don't forget we're hunting for Cabral and not for Germans," laughed the scientist. "Hello, there's Rio Hacha ahead! We'll soon have your 'Cabral person' now, boys."

CHAPTER II

THE ALCALDE

THE boys had not expected to find a large town at Rio Hacha, but they were not prepared for the miserable, filthy, ramshackle village in which they found themselves when they stepped ashore from the small boat. The thatched, wattled houses were raised on short posts above the muddy ground and pigs, chickens and other live stock wallowed and fed in the muck beneath the dwellings. The streets were unpaved, filthy, and filled with refuse. Naked children played in the gutters with pigs and mangy, flea-worried dogs, and everywhere was a fetid, oppressive stench of rotting vegetation, sewage and stale rum. Indeed, the sweetish, sickly odor of rum was the most prominent of all, for every other building appeared to be a drinking place and, judging from appearances, half of the male pop-

ulation was engaged in drinking the fiery native liquor while the other half slumbered in doorways. But the moment the party from the schooner appeared, the slumberers awoke, the shops were forsaken and men, women and children swarmed about the strangers, chattering like a flock of parroquets and asking innumerable questions.

"I shouldn't think these people had ever seen a visitor before," declared Fred. "They act as if we were regular curiosities."

"We are, in a way," replied Mr. Grayson. "Few strangers visit the village and still fewer Americans. I expect many of these people have never seen a Yankee boy before."

"And *I'll* bet they've never seen a Scot," added Rob.

"With the entire population here it should be easy to get some information regarding Cabral," said Mr. Wilson. "We won't have to call on the town-crier or advertise in the local papers. All we have to do is to ask for him here and everyone in Rio Hacha will hear us."

Suiting his actions to his words, Mr. Wilson asked if anyone knew of Pedro Esquival Cabral or his whereabouts.

Instantly everyone commenced shouting and gesticulating at once and two burly mulattoes pushed through the crowd and announced that they were the brothers Cabral,—Pedro and Esqui-

val. They seemed deeply disappointed when Mr. Wilson declared they were not *the* Cabral and tried their best to convince him that a Cabral with two Christian names was not nearly as valuable as two Cabrals with the same names divided between them. But in the midst of their argument they were interrupted by a hawk-nosed, shifty-eyed individual who declared he could divulge the whereabouts of the desired party for the sum of ten pesos.

"I expect he's a fraud," declared Mr. Grayson. "But he may know something," and turning to the fawning native he offered him a peso. The man seemed highly insulted, muttered angrily, strutted and then begged for five pesos. Finally, convinced that the strangers could not be frightened or cajoled into paying more, he accepted the single coin and fulfilled his part of the bargain by declaring that Cabral was "somewhere else." This tickled the boys immensely and even Mr. Wilson and Mr. Grayson had to join in the roar of laughter that followed the man's smart trick.

The captain of the schooner now arrived on the scene. "It's of no avail questioning this rabble, Señores," he said. "Señor Cabral was a gentleman and would be unknown to these people. Let us go to the hotel and the Alcalde and we will secure information."

Following after the captain, the party picked

their way through the filthy streets and came to a better and cleaner part of the town. Here there were a number of wooden houses, a tiny plaza, several shops and some attempt at order and cleanliness. Over the door of a weather-beaten and dilapidated building were the words "Gran Hotel Europa" in large letters and to this place the guide led them.

"Oh, Rob, isn't this rich?" cried Fred as they climbed the rickety stairs and entered the hotel. "Did you ever see anything like it?"

"Hist, mon! where's your manners?" replied Rob in mock reproval. "Dinna ye realize 'tis the leading hostelry of the metropolis of Rio Hacha?"

"Airy and well ventilated," chuckled Fred, pointing to the many cracks in the walls and the shafts of sunshine streaming through the holes in the roof.

"An' the abiding place o' the big bugs of Colombia," added Rob, as a huge, black cockroach scurried across the dirty floor.

There was good reason for the boys' amusement, for the Gran Hotel Europa was the worst apology for a hotel that one could well imagine. A worm-eaten, battered table, littered with old newspapers and cigarette stubs, represented the office. Gaudy advertisements of patent medicines decorated the walls and a large room, above the door of which was painted "Sala," was bare of all furnishings

save a few broken-down, bent-wood chairs and a ragged hammock, while its walls were completely papered with old illustrated newspapers.

The captain rapped loudly on the walls and shouted and at the sound a frowsy, pajama-clad person raised a tousled head from the hammock and stared dully at the strangers with blood-shot eyes and then, with a sigh sank back to resume his interrupted siesta. Presently, a dirty Indian girl shuffled into sight and listlessly asked what was wanted. To Mr. Wilson's questions she replied that she remembered the Señor Cabral. A foreigner and very rich of a truth, for had he not given her the whole of two pesos as a tip. Yes, he had stopped at the hotel; but he had gone,—it might be two weeks or two months ago, she could not say, for how could she remember, when each day was so like another? Where had he gone? To Venezuela, she thought; but it might be to America or Spain or even Europe; how could she say, when there were so many places to which one might go?

"I should think he would have gone, after stopping here!" exclaimed Fred. "I wonder if she knows anything."

"She knows enough to take a tip," replied Mr. Wilson as he thanked the girl and handed her a peseta. "Come on, I guess the Alcalde's our last resort," he continued, and following the captain,

the party left the hotel and crossed the plaza to a huge, rambling structure with "Alcaldia" painted over the doorway. A ragged urchin, clad in blue denim, appeared from the shade of a mango tree and presented arms with an ancient, rusty carbine grasped in one hand while with the other he pressed a mango to his mouth, and at once dodged back to his shade as the party passed on.

His double appeared from nowhere and inquired the business of the Americans, as they mounted the steps and entered the doorway, and then produced stiff, native chairs, covered with jaguar skin, in which he bade the visitors be seated while he summoned the Alcalde.

"This *is* a comic-opera town, Grayson," declared Mr. Wilson as the diminutive soldier scurried across the plaza. "Imagine the mayor leaving the city hall in charge of these chaps. Evidently the municipal duties are not very onerous here."

"Not much different from most little Colombian towns," replied the other. "Probably all the Alcalde gets is what he receives in tips and graft; but I'll warrant there are more officials here than in the capital of any one of our states."

At this moment they were startled by a blood-curdling yell from within the building, and which was followed by curses and howls.

"What *is* that awful noise?" cried Fred. "Is someone being murdered?"

"Sounds like it," replied Mr. Wilson. "Perhaps we'd better investigate."

"The army's coming to do that," chuckled Mr. Grayson. "I expect it's some prisoners kicking up a rumpus. The back of this place is the jail."

"I'm going to see what 'tis," declared Fred as the "army," in the shape of the denim-clad sentry, pattered up the steps still munching a mango, and, accompanied by Rob, Fred hurried after the little soldier who grinned amiably at them.

At the end of the corridor the sentry stopped and unfastening a ponderous old-fashioned lock, opened a heavy door and spoke rapidly and with many curses. Peering over his shoulders, the boys saw a small room with barred windows and a pair of stocks in one corner. Seated upon the floor, or stretched at full length on dirty blankets, were half a dozen men who gave not the slightest heed to a couple of negroes who were struggling in the center of the room among the litter of playing cards and small coins. At the sound of the sentry's voice the two ceased fighting and both began to jabber excitedly, whereupon the tiny representative of the law strode into the room, and, with kicks and blows of his carbine butt, drove the negroes to the stocks, locked them in and then, calmly pocketing the money on the floor, withdrew

and locked the door,—all without dropping his mango.

"Pardon, Señores, for the molestation of your comfort which was caused," he said, turning to the boys. "But they are desperate criminals and forever quarreling. They should have been shot long ago, but the Señor Alcalde is soft-hearted and they are of the English Jamaica and one cannot lightly shoot such, for their English king is a fool and makes his consuls to waste time by demanding trials even for such pigs. Is it not a regret, Señores, that such may be permitted to disturb one's siesta and the comfort of illustrious visitors by their noise. Now, if I were the Alcalde——"

But what would have happened had the blood-thirsty little soldier been Alcalde the boys never learned, for the Alcalde himself had arrived and, at sound of his footsteps mounting the stairs, the sentry scurried forward and stood stiffly at attention as the mayor entered.

At sight of the Alcalde the boys had all they could do to control their mirth. He was very tall and enormously fat, with a flabby, leather colored face adorned with huge, bristling, white mustaches and with pale, watery blue eyes. He was clad in tight-fitting white trousers and a faded blue coat covered with frayed and tarnished gold braid while his feet were shod in high black boots bear-

ing enormous jangling spurs. Upon his head was a tiny white-duck cap with tortoise-shell visor; a soiled bath towel was tied about his neck; he wore a broad leather belt in which was an ugly-looking pistol and he was mopping his streaming face with a yellow and purple bandana handkerchief as he puffed and panted from the exertion of climbing the short flight of steps.

Gravely shaking hands with his visitors, he inquired the reason he had been honored by their presence and placed himself and his country at their disposal. His thin, squeaky, high-pitched voice was so out of keeping with his elephantine proportions that the boys became scarlet with suppressed laughter; but at his first words in reply to Mr. Wilson's questions they became sober and attentive.

"Ah, yes," he squeaked, "I know the Señor Cabral well,—my dear friend he was while he honored our poor city with his presence. And a brave man, for did he not attempt to go into the country of the Mogollones! But he was obliged to return, for his men refused to go beyond the first mountains. And since he has departed there has been no man of the world, of culture and education with whom I, of the family of Nuñez and of the education of the College of Bogota, may hold converse. Where has he gone?—you ask. To Maracaibo, Señores; there to seek a ship for La

Guaira,—if God wills that he arrives,—for he was firm of his mind to land on Goajira to inspect the richness of timber, for has he not a concession from His Excellency the President to cut the woods that in Goajira are of such a value."

"Looks as if we'd have to go to Maracaibo," remarked Mr. Wilson. "Cabral seems to be leading us a long chase. But now we've come so far we might as well keep on. How did he go to Maracaibo, Señor Alcalde?"

"He purchased here a sloop and for crew took two Indian lads, with Pepe, a mestizo, for his captain," replied Nuñez. "She was a good boat, Señores," he added, "and Pepe knows the coast as he knows his own finca. Of a truth, he will arrive in safety if he risks not landing on that accursed shore."

Thanking the Alcalde for his information and apologizing for disturbing him, the party rose to leave; but the Alcalde would not listen to this. No indeed; the Americans must be fatigued and famished; they must have breakfast with him; he would be desolated if they refused. And so, despite their desire to be off, his invitation was accepted and telling the captain to get the crew together and be ready to sail as soon as they came aboard, the party adjourned to the Alcalde's house just beyond the confines of the village.

Much to the boys' surprise the mayor's residence

was really charming; a low, wooden bungalow set in the midst of a lovely flower garden enclosed by high stone walls and shaded by scarlet flowered Poinciana trees and Royal palms and half hidden in masses of climbing roses and flaming Bougainvillea. Inside, the house was neat and clean and lavishly furnished, though in a most incongruous manner. Ranged about the sides of the rooms were chairs, settees and rockers of bent wood; the walls were hung with gaudy chromos of illustrious generals, European monarchs and battle scenes mingled with religious subjects, and from the ceiling hung immense, old, cut-glass candelabra. Moth-eaten animal skins covered the floors and innumerable shaky tables groaned under a miscellaneous collection of sea-shells, gilt vases filled with artificial flowers, water worn agate pebbles, china animals, old newspapers and magazines and battered photograph albums. On an ornate easel was a cheap crayon enlargement of the Alcalde in the resplendent uniform of a general of the Colombian army and on a similar easel in the opposite corner was another enlargement of a dusky woman in high tortoise-shell comb and mantilla. The furnishings were completed by earthenware ollas, ornate cuspidors and porcelain animals scattered about the floor, while a life-sized celluloid doll baby occupied a place of honor on

top of a piano which might well have been brought over with Columbus.

Leaving his guests seated in the formally arranged chairs and bidding them make themselves entirely at home, the Alcalde excused himself and waddled off towards the rear of the house.

As his footfalls became faint and a door banged, Mr. Grayson rose and hastily rummaged through the periodicals and papers on the tables. "Looks as if we might find something besides Cabral!" he exclaimed as he examined a paper-bound book. "Look here, Wilson!"

Mr. Wilson stepped to the scientist's side. "By Jove, yes!" he ejaculated.

"Why, that's German!" cried Fred, who was peering past his father at the pamphlet.

"Hush, not so loud!" Mr. Grayson cautioned him. "Did you notice anything peculiar about our Alcalde friend?"

"No, can't say that I did," replied Mr. Wilson. "What was it?"

"Didn't you notice his belt?" continued the other. "A braided leather affair with a brass buckle and on the buckle 'Gott mit uns'."

"Oh, well, he might have that all right," replied Mr. Wilson. "There were plenty of Germans here; probably given to him by some friend and I expect you'd find German catalogues and pam-

phlets in pretty nearly every village and house in Colombia. You're too suspicious and imaginative, Grayson."

The scientist chuckled: "And you're not trained to scientific observation," he replied. "That belt is the standard service belt of the German army and this pamphlet's published by the Kaiser's government and deals with the plans of Germany to wipe the Allies off the map and secure the world's trade. I'll admit our friend might possess both without reason for suspicion; but when the pamphlet has 'To my esteemed friend, Don Jose Nuñez, from Underlieutenant Franz Engel,' written on its fly-leaf and when Nuñez carries a Hun naval revolver and wears German marine's boots, I smell a rat. Hist, here he comes!"

Replacing the pamphlet on the table, Mr. Grayson resumed his seat and, an instant later, the Alcalde entered. He had doffed coat, cap, towel, belt and pistol, as well as boots and spurs, and was clad in loose-fitting linen and smilingly informed his visitors that breakfast was ready. The meal was served on a broad gallery at the rear of the house and the doves and chickens made themselves quite at home, picking up crumbs beneath the table and now and again fluttering up to the table top, only to be shooed off by the Alcalde. This was very amusing to the boys whose sense of humor was still further aroused by the incon-

gruity of the table ware. The forks, spoons and serving dishes were all of solid old Spanish silver, and the frayed and patched table cloth was of the finest hand-made lace; but the crockery was of the cheapest and ugliest ware and badly chipped and cracked at that. The food was served by a number of mestizo boys and girls who seemed constantly to be running back and forth with dishes and viands, and the boys were utterly bewildered at the number of courses until they discovered that each vegetable was brought in by itself as a distinct course. But the food was good and the boys were hungry and, despite their excitement over Mr. Grayson's discoveries, they made an excellent meal. When they had finished the Alcalde insisted upon showing them over his house and grounds, in which he took great pride, and apologized at every step for the disorder and neglect, explaining that his wife was in Cartagena and it was impossible to secure efficient servants. But at last the inspection was over; the Americans had admired the flowers and fruits, had seen the chickens and pigs and doves, had complimented the owner on his charming home and, having thanked him warmly for his hospitality, bade him good-by and made their way towards the beach.

"Do you really think he's a German spy?" asked Fred as soon as they were out of earshot of the house.

"Of course not," replied Mr. Grayson. "There's no need for a spy here,—nothing to spy on, you know. Colombia has never declared war on Germany and it's nobody's business how many Germans live here or what dealings the natives have with them. But I *do* believe our Nuñez friend has lately been in close touch with a German warship. Half his stores and provisions are German made. Of course, everything I've mentioned may have come from one of the Hun ships interned in a Colombian port; but I'm beginning to think there is some truth in the rumor of a submarine base on this coast and I'll bet the Alcalde could tell something about it if he wanted to."

"Then let's signal for that destroyer!" exclaimed Fred.

"Nonsense!" ejaculated his father. "Grayson's just trying to get you boys excited over nothing. He's a regular kid himself."

"No, I'm in earnest, Wilson," declared the scientist. "But it would be nonsense to signal the destroyer, I admit. Even if Nuñez knows all about a base our men couldn't make him tell and they have no authority to land here. It would merely cause trouble."

"Then what good would it do for them to find a submarine base?" inquired Rob.

"That's a different matter," explained Mr. Gray-

son. "A base is a breach of neutrality and our boys wouldn't stop to ask whether or not they had a right on Colombian soil if they found one. It would be a case of hang first and try afterwards."

"Well, I do hope we find a Hun base," announced Fred. "Not a chance of it," said his father, decisively. "We're going straight to Maracaibo from here and as soon as we find Cabral we're off for Colon. This is a purely business trip, you must remember."

"Supposing we find Cabral has gone to La Guajira?" asked Fred, winking at Rob.

"I won't promise," replied his father. "Although I suppose I'll have to go chasing after him if I ever expect to have peace again."

"Man proposes and God disposes," remarked Rob, sagely. "Do you mind the time when a certain scientific gentleman made a statement regarding a certain mine bein' lost for three hundred years and not bein' on the itinerary of the jaunt we were taking?"

"That's a good dig at you, Grayson," chuckled Mr. Wilson. "Well, if Fate takes a hand here as it did with you boys before, I suppose I'll have to stand back."

The party had now reached the landing-place and all were soon aboard the schooner, and, half an hour later, Rio Hacha was a mere speck against

the greenery of the shores far astern. Ahead, and stretching inland to the distant blue mountains, was the unbroken, unknown jungle of Goajira, and the boys scanned it eagerly as they skirted along the coast.

Shipwrecked

THE four slept on deck and were rudely awakened by a terrific crash and the terrified cries of the crew and, before they could rise, all were rolled head-over-heels into the scuppers.

Dazed and frightened, the two boys scrambled to their feet, holding to the shrouds to steady themselves, and found the schooner heeled far over to one side and with sails, ropes and rigging flapping about, while the captain and crew were crawling like huge monkeys along the slanting deck and shouting, gesticulating and cursing.

"Wha—what's the matter?" cried Fred, as his father and Mr. Grayson drew themselves up beside the boys.

"We've run aground," replied Mr. Wilson, "and struck hard, too. Why doesn't that confounded skipper get in the sails,—she'll carry away her sticks in a moment!"

"He's too frightened to do anything," declared the scientist.

"Come along, boys, we'll have to get in the canvas by ourselves," and as he spoke Mr. Grayson clawed his way to the halliards, followed by Mr. Wilson and the boys. "Haul the sheet flat, Wilson," he shouted, "and we'll lower away," and a moment later the big mainsail came down on the run. Then, hurrying forward as rapidly as the sloping deck would permit, and shouting at the captain and crew, who were attempting to launch the boat, the scientist and his companions reached the foresail halliards and lowered that sail. This accomplished, Mr. Grayson turned his attention to the men still about the small boat, and seizing a wooden belaying pin and striking right and left, he sprang among them and by threats and blows drove them from the boat-tackle. The schooner, relieved of the pressure on her sails, had now righted and was on an almost even keel and the crew, noticing this and more afraid of the raging American and his belaying pin than of drowning, ceased their shouting, but, still muttering, clustered about the fore-hatch.

Calling to the captain to sound the well and find out if the schooner was leaking badly, Mr. Grayson turned to his companions. "Well, she can't sink far anyway," he announced, wiping the perspiration from his face. "The old craft's hard and fast

aground and I guess there's nothing to do but sit tight and wait for daylight. I wonder how that fool captain managed to put her on the reef on a clear night like this?"

"Went to sleep, I expect," replied Mr. Wilson. "Lucky these native boats are built of hard wood and heavy enough for battleships. Any ordinary craft would have gone to pieces with such a blow."

"And still luckier the sea is smooth," added Mr. Grayson.

"An' luckiest of all that we had ye along, sir," put in Rob. "Hoot, mon! I didna ken ye was sich a braw sailor-man, Mr. Grayson."

"Yes, you should have been a sea-captain," laughed Fred. "Gee, it *was* fine the way you waded into that bunch about the boat!"

The captain now appeared and reported two feet of water, and he was promptly ordered to man the pump. Muttering that 'twas of no use, he slunk away and a moment later the steady clank of the pump proved he had obeyed orders, despite his misgivings.

"Will we have to take to the boats?" asked Fred.

"Can't say until daylight, when we can have a look about," replied the scientist. "There's scarcely any tide here, but even a foot will help, and if we struck at low water we may be able to get her off at high tide. It depends on how she struck

and whether or not she's leaking too much to float."

"We'll know soon now," announced Mr. Wilson. "It's only an hour to daylight. Hello, the pump's stopped!"

Calling to the skipper, Mr. Grayson demanded to know why the pump was not kept going and was told that it sucked dry.

"Try it again in ten minutes," he shouted back.

But when the pump had been used for another fifteen minutes it again sucked.

"I guess she'll float if we get her off," declared Mr. Grayson. "We may have to keep pumping to keep her up; but unless she starts another leak we can hold our own, I think."

Thus talking and discussing the chances of reaching Maracaibo in the schooner, the four passed the time until the eastern sky turned to gold and day dawned with tropic suddenness. Fortunately the sea still remained calm, with scarce a hint of waves or swell. As soon as it was really light the boat was lowered and Mr. Grayson, Mr. Wilson and the captain paddled it slowly about the schooner, peering into the clear water and constantly sounding.

"She's resting on a narrow coral reef," announced the scientist as the three again boarded the schooner, "and she's fast just forward of amidships. If we can get her stern down by shift-

ing ballast we may be able to haul her off with the windlass. We'll eat breakfast first and then have a try at it."

"The tide is rising, according to the captain," said Mr. Wilson. "We have that to be thankful for."

While breakfast was being prepared the men, now quite brave and cheerful, were kept busy shifting the stone and pig-iron ballast to the stern of the vessel and in getting together all the available cable. When this was done, the cable and anchor were placed in the boat and carried several hundred feet astern, where the anchor was dropped back of a small reef. Then the cable was laid along the decks, a turn was taken around the capstan and all hands, including the boys, bent to the capstan bars. The thick rope tightened, strained and cracked, but the schooner held fast and not another inch of cable could be gained.

"We'll have to clap on a tackle," declared Mr. Wilson. "We can't get purchase enough here. Too bad she hasn't a modern, geared winch." Accordingly, the heavy halliard blocks were taken down, the cable was made fast to the blocks, the halliards were led to the capstan and once more everyone heaved with all their strength at the bars.

"Heave ho! Heave ho!" shouted Mr. Grayson, and slowly, almost imperceptibly, the cable came in.

"Bully! Hurrah!" yelled the boys, and thus

encouraged, all redoubled their efforts. Inch by inch the capstan turned; inch by inch the rope wound in and then, so suddenly that the men flew sprawling on the decks, the capstan spun round, there was a scraping, grating sound, a jolt, and the schooner slipped from the coral and floated on the sea. The boys cheered and danced, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Grayson clapped each other on the back; the crew picked themselves up and grinned, and the captain fervently crossed himself and thanked the Saints for saving his schooner.

But it was soon evident to all that their troubles were not over, for the vessel was leaking badly and rested heavily and sluggishly upon the water. At once the pump was started, while some of the men shifted the ballast back and, as soon as the pump sucked, the cables and anchor were taken in and sails hoisted. But by the time this was accomplished the schooner had again settled appreciably and once more the pump was manned.

"Looks as if we're out of the frying pan and into the fire," remarked Mr. Wilson. "Do you think we'll be able to keep her afloat until we make Maracaibo, Grayson?"

"I expect we opened another seam pulling her off," replied the other, "and we may increase the leaks as soon as the strain of her sails begins to tell. It's nip and tuck to keep up with the leaks now and I think we'd better put in somewhere and

make temporary repairs. There must be some place where we can careen her. I'll ask the captain."

"Yes," he announced, as he returned from a conference with the skipper. "He says it's the only thing to be done and he knows just the place for the work,— a sheltered lagoon with a good beach and deep water close inshore. Says he careened a vessel there once before."

"But isn't that the Goajira coast off there?" asked Fred, pointing to the shore towards which the schooner was heading.

"Yes, it's Goajira, but there's no danger from Indians there, the captain tells me. I guess we needn't be afraid if he and his crew are not."

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of the danger," declared Fred. "I'd like nothing better than to land on Goajira."

"Aye, 'twill be a bonny lark," added Rob. "An' I'm thinkin' Fate *is* takin' a wee bit interest in this trip. Eh, Mr. Wilson?"

Although the coast was but a few miles distant it began to look as if the schooner would never make it, for even with the light breeze, the leaks were being increased every moment and the men were compelled to keep the pumps going ceaselessly. Even so, the incoming water held its own and the pump failed to make any impression. Indeed, within two hours after leaving the reef, the water

actually had gained a few inches and the schooner rolled and wallowed along like a water-logged wreck.

But with each anxious moment that passed the shore grew more and more distinct and the boys could make out the trees and shrubbery, the entrances to tiny bays and the slender threads of streams where they flowed across the beach. Then, some rocky islets came into view; an inlet opened in the foliage beyond and, slipping by the islands, the schooner passed between a palm-clad, sandy point and a rocky headland and entered a broad, landlocked lagoon. With deck almost awash, with cascades of water pouring from her scuppers to the frantic strokes of the pump and with scarce a breath of air to fill her sails, the rapidly-sinking vessel drifted across the lagoon and entered a narrow channel between dense walls of mangroves. Hastily the boat was lowered, a line was run out and the men, tugging lustily at the oars, slowly towed the schooner up the winding waterway among the trees. Then, just as the water lapped the decks, the channel opened out into a beautiful, lake-like expanse with a steep sandy beach on its further side. A moment later, the vessel touched bottom close to the beach and everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

"I don't see as we're much better off," declared

Fred. "The schooner's sunk now. How are we going to stop the leaks when she's full of water?"

"The first thing is to lighten her," replied Mr. Grayson, "by stripping off all the sails and rigging; taking all the supplies and fittings ashore and pumping out all the water possible and then, at high water, we'll haul her in as far as we can. In a couple of tides we ought to get her considerably nearer shore and then, if we can keep the water under control, we'll take out the ballast, move her in near enough to clap a tackle on her masts and heave her down. Then we can caulk part of the leaks on one side and will be able to pump her drier and heave her over the other way and caulk that side. Every leak we stop makes it easier to pump her out and get her nearer the beach, until we can get at all the seams. It's going to be a hard job and take time; but it's the only solution."

"Oh, *we* don't mind staying here a month," declared Fred. "There's fish and game and it's a jolly place to explore. Why, we're right in the midst of the jungle and hidden from the whole world. Wouldn't it be a fine spot for pirates?"

"Or for a Hun base?" suggested Mr. Wilson, with a wink.

"I can understand how there *could* be a submarine base here, now I see this place," said Fred.

"No one would ever guess there was a lagoon here. It's completely hidden by those islands and a boat could pass right by and never guess it."

"But there isn't any base, nevertheless," replied his father. "We're the sole occupants and you boys are welcome to enjoy yourselves by poking about and pretending to find Huns or pirates or anything else, provided you don't go too far and don't get lost. Besides, we'll depend on your guns and fishing tackle to supply us with food. We haven't any too large a supply of provisions aboard."

"You'll need a boat," said Mr. Grayson. "The captain tells me this beach is on an island, but that the mainland is only a mile or so away, over to the south. He says a good-sized river flows into the lagoon and you can tell where it is by the current. You can take that little cayuca that the captain has lashed on the deck-house, as we'll need the boat. But don't get lost in the mangroves. These channels are a regular labyrinth; but if you're in any doubt keep headed north and follow the flow of the tide."

"Oh, we won't get lost," declared Fred, confidently.

"An' if we do we'll fire three shots and ye can answer," added Rob, with true Scotch caution.

The boys were all excitement to get away and, after a second hearty breakfast, for all had worked

FLOCKS OF HERONS ROSE FROM THE TREES AND FLAPPED AWAY

hard during the morning, the little dug-out was launched and, well provided with guns and fishing tackle, the two boys paddled away and, crossing the little lagoon, entered the channel among the mangroves.

The place teemed with life and as the canoe slipped noiselessly along, flocks of white and blue herons; croaking white ibis; rosy spoonbills and dazzling white egrets rose constantly from the trees and flapped away. Once the boys surprised a flock of scarlet ibis and cried out in admiration at the flaming creatures perched upon a tree and appearing like giant red flowers among the leaves. In the tree-tops flocks of parroquets screamed and chattered; slender-necked snake-birds preened themselves on jutting stumps; dainty sandpipers and long-toed jacanas ran nimbly over the soft mud of the banks and queer little grebes paddled about and dipped beneath the water as the canoe approached.

"They're bonny pretty," remarked Rob. "But I dinna see fowl fit to eat amongst them."

But even as he spoke there was a whirr of wings and a flock of tree-ducks rose from the water ahead. Fred grasped his gun and with a quick shot brought down two of the birds, and the boys paddled rapidly forward to secure their prizes. The first was picked up and dropped into the canoe and Fred was about to reach for the other when

there was a swirl of water, a rough, black object shot upward from the depths, there was a vicious snap and the duck disappeared in an eddy of foam.

"Alligators!" cried Fred. "Did you see him, Rob?"

"Did I?" replied the Scot. "Mon, but 'tis no bathing place here!"

"Golly, he nearly got my hand!" exclaimed Fred. "He *was* a whopper! I'll be more careful next time."

But apparently there was to be no next time, for the report of the gun had frightened off any game in the vicinity and although the boys paddled about for several hours, they saw no more ducks.

"I vote we try fishing," said Fred at last. "I expect it's too late in the day for game. We can come back this afternoon, or else tomorrow we'll start early and go over to the mainland."

This seemed a good idea, and tying their canoe to a stump, the boys tried their luck at fishing. At this they were more successful than in hunting and they soon had a fine lot of fish. Most of these were unfamiliar to the boys, but among the lot were mullet and grunts and, as Rob remarked, "All scale fish are good to eat," so only the spiny, ugly catfish and slimy suckers were thrown away.

When, at last, the boys were tired of fishing and started to return to the schooner they were in doubt as to which way to go.

"I think it's that way," declared Fred, pointing. "You know we turned to the right from the main channel and we were going down towards the first lagoon, so we should go up this channel and turn to the left."

"Aye, but which is down stream?" replied Rob. "Do you mind the current's moving the way you say is 'up'?"

"Well then, the tide's turned," insisted Fred. "Remember Mr. Grayson said to follow the flow of the tide?"

"Very well," assented Rob. "But I mind we tied to the *right* side of the creek and if you're right we're on the left now. Riddle me that, my boy."

Fred looked puzzled and grinned sheepishly. "That's so," he admitted. "I guess I got turned around when we went after that duck."

Rob laughed. "Ye should imbibe a wee bit o' canniness fra your Scotch chum," he chuckled. "I minded we might be a bit confused an' broke a twig here an' there as we passed. Look yonder, Fred, and ye'll see the last one."

Fred glanced at the spot Rob indicated and saw a broken branch of the mangrove dangling over the water. "You're right and I'm wrong, Rob," he confessed. "I was too sure of myself. I wondered why you were grabbing the branches as we came along."

Guided by the twigs, the boys soon reached the main creek and, turning to the left, safely gained the lagoon and the schooner.

Much had been accomplished during the boys' absence and on the beach was a huge pile of sails, cordage, anchors and spars and some of the latter, together with the mainsail, had been converted into a good-sized tent. The schooner, relieved of all this weight, had been moved several yards nearer shore and the crew was busily pumping as the boys approached.

"We're gaining on the water," announced Mr. Wilson as the boys gained the deck. "The tide will be high in a few moments and we'll try to get her further inshore. What luck did you have?"

"Not much," replied Fred. "We shot two ducks, but an alligator got one, and we've caught a good mess of fish."

"They'll be mighty welcome," declared Mr. Grayson. "We're all hungry as hawks. Come on, boys, the tide's full now. We'll all give a hand and see if we can gain a few feet."

The anchors had been firmly fixed to trees ashore and the cables led through tackles fore and aft and, at the scientist's orders, everyone hauled and tugged at the ropes and little by little the schooner was drawn closer to the shore.

"We'll call that a day's work," announced Mr.

Grayson, when all efforts failed to move the vessel further. "We've accomplished a lot and far more than I expected. Gosh, that frying fish *does* smell good!"

CHAPTER IV

Mysterious Discoveries

EARLY the next morning the boys again set out in the cayuca, determined to reach the mainland and bring back more game. So confident were they of success that they hurried down the channel through the mangroves without stopping, even when a flock of ducks whirred up and presented an easy mark.

But when they reached the main lagoon, they found a stiff breeze blowing and whipping the surface of the water into spiteful whitecaps.

"We'll have to follow the shores," declared Fred, as the two looked forth from the shelter of the mangroves at the wind-swept surface. "This little canoe would never stand that."

"Well, the longest way round is the shortest way home," observed Rob sagely.

By paddling in the shelter of the mangroves, the canoe was kept in calm water and the boys kept steadily on, skirting the shores and maintaining a sharp lookout for the current of the river, which would tell them that the mainland was at hand.

Many openings in the wall of trees were passed, some barely wide enough to admit the canoe and others broad creeks which would have accommodated a large ship.

Waterfowl were everywhere; now and then a large alligator slipped from the mud and sank in the dark waters at the boys' approach and once, a tremendous splash and a loud bellow startled the boys, who peered furtively among the interlaced mangrove roots, momentarily expecting to see some ferocious animal. Then, as a misshapen black head rose slowly from the water a few rods away, Fred burst out laughing. "We were silly!" he exclaimed. "It was only a sea-cow."

"Sea-cow!" cried Rob in surprise. "Sea-devil is more suited to yon beastie, *I'm* thinkin'."

"They *are* ugly," Fred acknowledged. "But just the same, old Columbus thought they were mermaids when he first saw them. They're harmless creatures and mighty good eating; but there's no use shooting at them,—they're awfully tough and sink when killed. Over in Bocas del Toro they get them with harpoons."

A short time after the incident of the sea-cow, the boys noticed that it required greater efforts to urge the canoe forward. At first they were puzzled and then it suddenly dawned upon them that they were in a strong current. "It's the river!" exclaimed Fred. "Look there, how the water swirls around those roots!"

"You're right," agreed Rob. "But it doesn't look like solid land, laddie."

"We'll have to go further up, I expect," replied the other. "It's all swamp here."

Presently, however, the mangroves gave way to other trees, the muddy banks became higher and showed patches of vegetation and sand and soon the boys were paddling between brush-covered, sandy banks with tall trees standing high above the jungle. Rounding a bend, the canoe was run ashore at a shelving bit of bank and the boys stepped onto dry land.

"Hurrah, we're on Goajira at last!" cried Fred. "Now for some exploring! Isn't it jolly to be where no one else has trod?"

"Aye, only some other body's been here before us," replied Rob. "Look here, Fred, here's a trail!"

"Gee!" exclaimed Fred, as he turned at Rob's statement and saw the narrow pathway through the thicket. "I do believe you're right! Perhaps it's an Indian trail! Say, we'd better look out!"

"If it's an Indian trail there should be canoes about," argued Rob. "But we'd best be muckle canny. I've no mind to have *my* feet sliced, Fred, lad."

"I guess we'd better clear out," said Fred. "I'm not exactly afraid; but it *is* kind of creepy here, knowing it's unexplored and full of savages. But it's an awful shame to go back after coming all this way, and without shooting anything."

"Gang awa', Fred!" replied his friend. "There's as good fish in yon sea as ever were caught, an' there's a muckle bit o' bush about yon lagoon. If we fired a gun every Indian for miles would ken we're here. Come along, Fred, they may be speilin' at us now!"

Rob's discovery had shaken the nerves of both boys, and hurrying to the canoe, they pushed off from the bank and sped swiftly down the river. Once in the lagoon, they overcame their fears, and selecting a promising-looking creek, paddled up the waterway among the mangroves. For some distance they saw nothing but herons, ibis and other worthless birds; but soon the channel narrowed, the banks became dryer and the boys decided to land and hunt among the trees.

"I suppose this must be an island," remarked Fred, as they tied the canoe and stepped ashore. "Hello, here are tracks of some animal!"

Cautiously advancing over the soft earth, the

two followed the well-marked tracks and had gone but a short distance when, with a queer, coughing squeal a large brown creature jumped up and tore madly off between the trees. Both boys fired and hurried forward to see if they had brought down the animal and found it quite dead a score of yards away. It was a short-legged creature with a large head and with coarse brown hair covered with white spots. "It's a conejo," declared Fred, "A paca, you know. Don't you remember we killed some over in Panama?"

"An' fine tasting they were, too," added Rob. "Maybe we can find another."

But a diligent search failed to reveal another paca and the boys had given up and were retracing their way to the canoe, when seeds dropping from a tree caused them to stop and look up and, a minute later, a fine curassow or wild turkey was added to their bag.

"I guess we've enough for today," remarked Fred, as they reached the cayuca. "Let's fish awhile."

This met with Rob's approval and for the next hour or two the boys fished with excellent results.

"Man, but I'm fair famished!" declared Rob, at last. "Let's sample some of these fish before we start back, Fred."

Building a little fire of dry twigs and branches, the boys broiled several fish over the coals and,

having partially satisfied their appetites, started for the lagoon and the schooner.

They had almost reached the mouth of the creek when Rob uttered a cry of warning and surprise, and the next instant a high wave came rushing up the waterway, lifting and tossing the light canoe and washing over the low, muddy banks. "What on——" commenced Fred, but before the sentence was finished a second wave rolled in from the lagoon, to be followed by a third and fourth, each smaller than the one preceding it. When the last had passed the two boys gazed at one another in silence, too amazed and puzzled to speak. Rob was the first to find his voice. "Hoot, laddie!" he cried. "Did ye ever see anything like yon? Was it a tidal-wave, do you think?"

"I'm sure I don't know," replied Fred. "It felt just like the wake of a steamer; but of course there are no steamers here. I give it up. We'll have to ask Mr. Grayson about it."

Without further incident the boys reached the little lagoon and were surprised to see the schooner heeled far over to one side, with a large part of her weed-covered bottom exposed, while several men were busily working at the planking.

"Why, she's tipped over!" exclaimed Fred.

"Aye, but tipped on purpose," replied Rob. "Don't you see her masts are tied down to yon trees?"

"So they are," agreed the other. "They must have careened her, as Mr. Grayson called it. It must have been easier than they expected."

"Everything is going finely," declared Mr. Wilson, as the boys landed on the beach. "After we removed the ballast the leaks decreased and we pumped her out and careened her and the men have caulked several of the worst leaks already. Some of the planks are crushed and must be replaced, however, and that takes time."

"But not so long as if we had to cut trees and get out new timber," added Mr. Grayson. "We can rip some planks from the hatch-covers and use them and cover the hatches with canvas. What luck today, boys?"

"We killed a conejo and a wild turkey and caught some fish," replied Fred.

"And saw a sea-cow," added Rob.

"Fine!" ejaculated the scientist "We'll have a regular dinner tonight. Did you reach the mainland?"

The boys then told of finding the trail and related the incident of the waves.

"I don't imagine there was any danger," declared Mr. Grayson. "Very likely it's an old trail or is used by Indians going from the coast into the interior. They wouldn't be likely to live near the lagoon; but I think you were wise in taking no

chances. Stray savages might have been within hearing of a gunshot."

"But what made those waves?" persisted Fred. "That frightened me a lot more than finding the trail."

"Tide, probably," replied Mr. Grayson. "You say there was a stiff wind this morning and the lagoon was rough. If the wind blew the water out with the tide it might have come back with a rush when the tide turned. Sort of a 'bore,' as it's called."

"More likely an alligator or a sea-cow diving off the banks," said Mr. Wilson, trying to tease the boys. "You were so nervous over the trail that you imagined the size of the waves. A good big 'gator makes quite a splash, you know."

"Oh, you can't jolly us," declared Fred. "I tell you those waves were as big as if made by a steamship; weren't they, Rob?"

"Aye, the canoe fair stood on end with the first," agreed Rob.

"Even a small wave will pile up when it enters a narrow channel," commented Mr. Grayson. "The tide is the only way I can account for it."

"I suppose you're right," said Fred, and as dinner was now ready, the subject was forgotten.

The following day the boys found the lagoon smooth and unruffled by wind and Fred suggested

that they should cross over and explore the opposite shores.

"I vote we go over to that sandy point at the entrance to the bay," said Rob. "There are cocoanuts there and we could take some along for lunch and bring a lot back to the schooner."

"That's a good scheme," declared Fred. "Besides, we might find game there, or some turtle eggs."

Heading across the lagoon, the boys made for the sand-spit, with its waving palms, and half an hour later, drew the canoe upon the beach. By the water's edge was a narrow belt of thorny scrub and sea-grape trees; but away from this, the entire neck of land was covered with a veritable forest of palms, whose ripened nuts strewed the ground. At the boys' approach, thousands of giant land crabs scuttled into their holes; huge lizards dashed out of sight among the fallen leaves and trash and scores of pelicans rose, flapping from their immense nests among the brush. It was a strange place and the boys found much to interest them. They roared with laughter at the funny, ungainly baby pelicans; they caught land crabs and made them race on the sand; they climbed the trees and gathered a great pile of green "water-coconuts," and they wandered up and down the beach, picking up bright-colored sea shells and searching for turtle eggs. But there were no signs of either tur-

tles or game and at last the two tired of the novelty of the spot.

"There's nothing here," said Fred. "Let's cross over to that rocky point across the entrance of the lagoon. That's dry land with hills and has jungle and we might find something to shoot."

Gathering their supply of nuts, the boys paddled across the neck of the lagoon and landed in a tiny cove on the rocky shore. Here, close to the water, the jungle was very dense and the boys had difficulty in forcing a way through, even with the aid of their machetes; but a few rods inland, the woods were more open and they proceeded cautiously in the hope of sighting game. For an hour or more they wandered about and were beginning to think their quest hopeless, when a deer jumped up almost at Rob's feet. At the report of his gun the deer fell, but instantly was up and off again.

"You hit him!" cried Fred. "We may get him yet!" and hurrying forward, the boys followed after the deer, guided by the drops of blood upon the ground.

They had traveled perhaps half a mile when Rob, who was leading, gave a cry of surprise. "Here's a cave!" he exclaimed.

Fred hurried to his side. "That's so," he agreed. "Let's look into it."

Before them was a steep-sided, rocky hill, covered with low bush and with a large opening near

its base. Clambering over the fallen rocks, the boys peered into the cavern. "The deer's gone in here, too," announced Rob, and pointing to blood spots on the bits of limestone.

"It's light inside," declared Fred. "Let's explore it."

Stooping, the boys entered and found that, just within, the cave widened out and that the roof was many feet above their heads. A slight noise caused them to start and they turned just in time to see the wounded deer spring from its resting place beside a mass of rock. Without thinking, Fred fired and both boys were almost stunned by the thunderous reverberations of the report, while bits of stone came rattling from the lofty roof and the air was filled with countless thousands of bats, startled from their roosting places.

"Whew!" exclaimed Fred. "That *did* give me a fright. I was a fool to fire a gun in here; it might have brought the whole cave down and locked us up in here forever."

"Well, you killed the deer, at any rate," remarked Rob.

"Now we've got him, let's explore the cave," suggested Fred, after the boys had inspected the dead deer.

"There's a passage yonder," declared Rob, and both boys picked their way over the fallen masses

THE AIR WAS FILLED WITH BATS, STARTLED FROM THEIR ROOSTING PLACES

of rocks and stalactites towards the arched opening Rob had spied.

It was not dark and this at first puzzled the boys until, in turning a sharp corner, they saw an opening ahead and sharply outlined against the brilliant sunshine and blue sky.

Hurrying forward, the two came to the end of the tunnel-like passage and peered out.

"Why, we're right on the seashore!" cried Fred in surprise.

"That's so," agreed his companion, "and we're outside the lagoon! See, there are the islands off there!"

"It'll save us a lot of trouble," commented Fred. "We can bring the cayuca around here and save carrying that deer clear back through the bush."

The opening where the boys stood was several feet above the narrow strip of beach and looked forth upon a broad expanse of glistening blue sea, with the two conical islands at the entrance to the lagoon scarce half a mile distant. As they sat enjoying the cool sweep of the Trade Wind, and gazing at the wooded islands, before returning for their canoe, Rob had an idea.

"I say, Fred!" he exclaimed, "what do you say to going out and exploring yon islands?"

"Bully!" cried Fred. "The sea's perfectly calm and we'll have to bring the cayuca around for the deer and it won't take any time to paddle over

there. Come on, Rob, let's go and get the canoe!"

Following along the shore, the boys soon reached the rocky point that marked the entrance to the lagoon, and clambering over hills, came to the little cove where they had left the cayuca.

"That's a lot easier than tramping all the way through the bush," remarked Fred, as they stepped into the little craft and seized their paddles.

Rob chuckled, "Aye, an' if you didn't heed where we were ganging after yon deer, we'd have had a muckle hard time findin' our way back."

"Oh, we could always have found the shore and gone back," declared the other, confidently.

Passing into the entrance to the lagoon, the canoe was headed for the island and, a few minutes later, the boys stepped ashore and hauled their cayuca upon a shelving rock among some bushes.

"I'll bet we're the first people ever to land here," declared Fred, as the two pushed their way through the dense tangle of long grass and bushes towards the slope of the hill.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, a moment later. "Here's another cave!"

Sure enough, in the base of the hill was a large opening and the boys, peering within, found that it was quite light and that the floor was covered deep with sea shells.

"I'd like to know how all those shells came here," said Fred. "I suppose someone must have brought

them here. But they must have been mighty hungry, or else they lived here a long time to have eaten all those shells. Why, there are tons of them!"

Rob stooped and picked up some of the shells. "Hoot, mon!" he exclaimed. "Nobody brought these here. They're fossil shells, Fred, and there's coral among them. I ken how they came here, laddie; this cave was under the sea sometime and the wee bit o' land's been raised. I mind Professor Abbott telling us about the same thing happening to the Isthmus the time we found yon shells in Culebra Cut."

"Yes, I guess you're right," agreed Fred. "But where does all the light come from. There isn't any other opening that I can see."

"Look aloft, lad," laughed Rob. "There's a skylight in this cave."

"Gosh, so there is!" exclaimed Fred, and both boys craned their necks and gazed upward to the roof of the cavern where, many feet above their heads, a ragged, narrow opening showed a patch of dazzling blue sky.

"Say, that must be right up at the top of the hill!" said Fred. "We'll climb up outside and look down. Come on, Rob. There isn't anything more to be seen here!"

Leaving the cave, the boys started to push and cut their way through the brush on their climb up

the steep hillside and had gone but a few yards when Fred gave a shout. "Here's a sort of path!" he cried. "Somebody *has* been here after all!"

The path which Fred had found was merely an indistinct trail where the brush had been cut away, and it led diagonally up the hillside.

"And not long ago," said Rob. "Some of these bushes haven't been cut but a few days."

"Well, there can't be Indians here, anyway," replied Fred, "and I don't see where anybody could hide except in the cave."

It was not a hard climb to the top of the hill, but there was no shade and the boys were glad when, at last, they reached the summit and seated themselves where they were partly sheltered from the sun by a clump of rather tall bushes. From this spot they could look out across the lagoon, with its numerous winding waterways and dark green mangrove swamps, to the distant mainland reaching inland to the blue mountains half-hidden by drifting clouds.

"Look, there's the schooner!" cried Fred. "See, right over to the left! You can just see a bit of her beyond the trees there."

"That's so," replied Rob. "Isn't it a fine view? See, there's the mouth of the river and,—Hello! do you see that, Fred? Do you see yon? Mon, mon, there's a house!"

"Gosh!" exclaimed Fred, as he gazed fixedly at the spot Rob indicated. "There *is* a building there! I can see its roof."

"Aye, and 'tis no Indian hut, either," declared Rob. "Yon house has an iron roof, Fred."

"That must be where the trail went to!" cried Fred. "I'll bet,—Golly! Rob, am I dreaming? Aren't those masts over there to the right of the roof?"

Rob stared for a moment without replying. "Hoot, laddie!" he exclaimed at last. "'Tis masts ye see richt enough, Fred; but I misdoubt they're on a ship. Do ye no think they're muckle like wireless masts, lad?"

"Wireless!" ejaculated Fred. "I never thought of that! Perhaps there's a Hun base over there! Say, we *must* hurry back and tell the others about this!"

"Nay, they're no wireless," announced the other, who had been watching the mysterious objects projecting above a clump of dense mangroves far across the lagoon. "'Tis a ship in there, Fred! I can see the cross-trees and topmasts! Look close and ye'll see!"

"Yes, I can see now," declared Fred. "And I can make out the shrouds, I think. But we'd best hurry back and tell the others anyhow. If there's a house and a boat there we might get help to fix

up the schooner. Gee! I thought sure we'd found a Hun base!"

Rising, the boys started across the summit of the hill, when Rob halted. "We haven't looked down yon skylight, yet," he said. "It won't take but a minute, and that's what we climbed up here for."

A few minutes' search revealed the opening they had seen from below,—a cleft in the limestone rock and many times larger than the boys had expected it to be. Cautiously approaching the edge of the opening on all fours, and testing each bit of rock before they put their weight on it, the boys reached the edge of the aperture and looked down.

"Why, that's not the cave we were in!" cried Fred. "There's nothing but water down there."

"Aye," replied Rob. "So I see; but look over to the left, Fred. There's our cave. Do ye no see how 'tis? There are two caves below, lad, one dry and the other full o' water and separated by a bit o' wall, with the same skylight for the two."

"Yes, that's it," agreed Fred. "Hello, what's this!" As he spoke, Fred grasped a slender root-like object that led over the verge of the opening and disappeared down the shaft.

"Of all things!" he continued. "It's a wire! Look here, Rob!"

Rob examined the object and gave a whistle of surprise. "'Tis just that," he announced. "An'

leadin' down into yon cave! Let's follow alang here and see what's at the ither end of it."

Creeping back from the hole, the two boys followed the strand of wire and found it led to a near-by bush, where it was made secure.

"This *is* mysterious," said Fred, as the two stood looking with puzzled faces at the wire. "Someone must have put it there; but I don't see what for. Let's pull it up from the cave. Perhaps it's got something fastened on the other end."

As they turned to go back to the opening, Rob looked seaward, and the next instant grasped his companion's arm and gave an exclamation of surprise. "Hoot, mon!" he cried. "There's a whale; my but he is a muckle monster!"

From where the boys stood upon the pinnacle of the island the water far below appeared as transparent as glass and the outline of rocks upon the bottom, the dark patches of sea-weed, the brilliant orange and yellow of corals and the areas of snowy sand were all plainly visible. And now, as at Rob's cry Fred turned and looked downward, he could see a huge, dark shape moving rapidly through the water far beneath the surface and clearly outlined against the bottom of the sea.

For an instant he looked and then, with a yell, leaped back among the bushes. "Whale!" he cried in excited tones. "Whale! That's no whale; it's a submarine!"

Rob, too surprised and dumfounded even to reply, could merely ejaculate, "Hoot!" over and over again as the two boys peered with wondering eyes at the strange object which was now plainly recognizable as an undersea boat and which was rapidly approaching the island.

"It's headed straight for here," declared Fred at last. "I wonder if they're going to land? Perhaps they've seen us and are going to capture us."

"Maybe 'tis yon American submarine," suggested Rob.

"No, it's not," declared Fred, positively. "She's different. I'll bet she's a Hun!"

"Weel, if she keeps agangin' as she is now she'll bump her nose 'gainst the rocks," said Rob. "Do they no' ken they canna' ram a bit o' island like this?"

"I do believe she will!" cried Fred. "Look, Rob, she's within a dozen yards of the rocks now! Why, why. Gosh! She's going to strike! Look, Rob, look, there she goes! She's—Gosh!" Then words failed him and he gazed with mouth agape at the sea beneath, for the submarine, instead of crumpling up as it reached the rocks, had vanished utterly as if by magic.

For an instant Rob also stared downward and then, leaping to his feet, he dashed to the opening in the hilltop and crawled forward and looked down. Close at his heels came Fred and as the

two stared at the water-filled cavern far beneath, a huge, black shape seemed to evolve from nowhere and came to rest on the surface of the mirror-like water that filled the cave.

"The submarine!" exclaimed Fred in awestruck tones. "How *did* she get there?"

"Hist!" cautioned Rob. "Dinna ye understand? Yon cave has an entrance under the sea, laddie, an' the 'sub' just sailed in! 'Tis a bonny spot to hide in. Look out!"

As Rob spoke he drew quickly back and Fred did the same, for a hatchway in the mysterious craft had opened and a man had emerged. He was quickly followed by a sailor who, with a boat-hook, reached toward the rocky wall and drew a rope-ladder forward. Mounting this, the first man climbed rapidly to a narrow shelf of rock and, reaching down, picked up a small object which he tossed to the sailor. "The wire!" exclaimed Fred in a whisper, as the mysterious wire beside the boys shook slightly.

"He's coming up here," continued Fred. "See, he's crawled into a hole! There must be another entrance to that cave on land. What will we do?"

"Hide," replied Rob, laconically. "There's plenty of bush we can crawl into."

Scurrying across the hilltop, the two boys wormed their way into the dense thicket and, completely screened from view, lay quietly and intently

watching the approach to the summit. Presently there was the sound of rattling pebbles, the heavy footsteps of someone approaching and the next moment a man appeared and, seating himself upon a bit of rock, mopped his scarlet, perspiring face with a huge handkerchief. Even without his association with the submarine, the boys would have known him for a Hun, for he was unmistakably German from his heavy, short boots to his officer's cap. His face, coarse and almost purple from sunburn and the exertion of the climb, was heavy-jowled and disfigured by a great livid scar across the cheek, and his short, bristling mustache was turned sharply upwards at the end, in a feeble attempt at imitating that of the Kaiser, while his thick bull-neck joined his bullet-shaped head in rolls of fat which flowed over the back of his collar. Presently he rose, made his way to the spot where the wire was fastened to the bush, and bending over, attached a field telephone to it. Then, mounting upon a piece of rock, he unrolled two signal flags and commenced to wig-wag some message towards the lagoon.

"He's signaling that house we saw," whispered Fred. "Can you see it from where you are?"

Rob twisted his head about. "Aye," he replied in a whisper. "I can just make it out. Hoot, mon, 'tis not yon house he's signaling; 'tis the boat we saw! There goes a signal on yon masts!"

As soon as the German saw his signals answered he commenced speaking into the telephone and, after a few more signals with his flags, he rolled them up, detached the instrument, again tied the wire to the bush and ponderously descended the pathway.

"I told you that was a Hun base!" exclaimed Fred, triumphantly. "Now we *are* going to have an adventure. We'll wait till that sub's gone and then build three smoky fires here and call the destroyer and then we'll hurry in for all we're worth and tell our people."

"Aye, and have yon Huns see the smoke and catch us," replied Rob. "Do ye no ken this hill's their signal station and they'll be veery watchful of it. An' do ye think they're blind, lad? Hoot, mon! They know our schooner's yonder as well as we do and they're just waiting for us to leave, a-trustin' we won't know they're here. Do ye think they'd be sich boobies as to let us gang awa', an' they kenned we'd seen aught o' them fra here?"

"I suppose that's so," admitted Fred, regretfully. "But we can tell our folks, anyway. Do you suppose the submarine has gone yet?"

"We'll have a look," replied Rob, and creeping cautiously to the opening they peered into the cave. But there was no sign of the submarine and the boys turned and gazed across the sea towards the lagoon.

"There she goes!" exclaimed Fred, and pointed to a slender streak of white moving swiftly through the entrance to the lagoon. "She's going in. Oh, look! See those waves breaking on the sand-spit? That's what made that swell that puzzled us. Won't Mr. Grayson be surprised? I said 'twas just like the wash from a steamer."

Hurrying down the steep pathway, the boys reached their cayuca and, forgetting all about their deer in the cave ashore, paddled madly towards the entrance to the lagoon.

They had passed the rocky point and were skirting the shores when they were startled by the sound of distant gunshots. "What's that?" exclaimed Fred. "It sounds like a fight!"

"Maybe someone hunting," replied Rob. "But,——"

At this instant there was the sound of a heavy, muffled explosion, and both boys stopped paddling and sat motionless, staring at one another.

"Golly!" exclaimed Fred. "I'll bet their old submarine has blown up!"

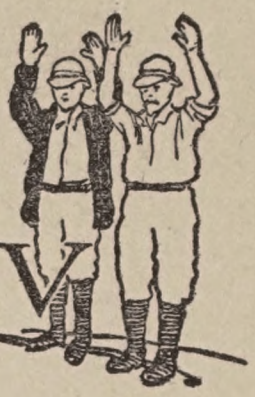
"So much the better," declared Rob. "Come on, Fred, let's hurry up and get to the schooner. If our people heard that they'll be fair daffy to know what 'tis."

Skirting the shores, for the boys were too nervous and too wise to cross the open lagoon in plain view, the canoe was sped as rapidly as possible to-

wards the waterway leading to the schooner and, half an hour later, the cayuca shot from the channel into the small lagoon.

And then, at their first glance towards the beach, the two cried out in unison and, dropping their paddles, sat staring dumbly shoreward. Upon the beach, where the tent and supplies had stood, was a smoldering pile of ashes; not a living soul was in sight and the schooner had disappeared!

CHAPTER V



Prisoners

FOR several hours after the boys left their friends and the schooner everything went well and the work progressed rapidly. All the leaks which could be reached on one side had been caulked and, by noon, the vessel had been turned around, careened on the opposite side and all was ready for continuing the work. Everyone was elated at the rapid progress which had been made and Mr. Wilson suggested that they had all best have lunch and rest before commencing to caulk the leaks on the side of the schooner now exposed.

"No use in overdoing," he declared. "We've all worked like beavers and at this rate we'll be ready to start in a couple of days."

"Yes, we've done finely," agreed Mr. Grayson.

"And the men have earned a good rest and siesta. They'll work all the better for it this afternoon." Calling to the captain, he told him to notify the men that they could quit and could rest for three hours, as they had done so well.

The men were highly pleased and all gathered in the shade ashore and were soon busy with their mid-day meal.

"I'm thankful those boys have had good luck so far," commented Mr. Grayson, as he picked a wild turkey bone. "This fresh meat has been a godsend. I don't know what we should have done without it."

"Right you are!" agreed Mr. Wilson. "I wonder where they went today? I haven't heard them shoot yet and they've been gone nearly five hours. I hope they don't get into trouble."

"Well, if they do you can be sure they'll get out again," laughed the scientist. "I never saw such a pair for running into tight places and squeezing through all right. Did I ever tell you about,——" What he was about to relate Mr. Wilson never knew, for at that instant the scientist's words were cut short by the sharp report of a rifle and the agonized screams of the captain, who sat beside Mr. Wilson. As the captain pitched forward and his tin cup and plate clattered to the ground, the first shot was followed by a scattering volley and instantly all was confusion. The men, panic-stricken

at the unexpected attack and the death of their captain, screamed in terror and those unhurt dashed madly towards the boat. But none reached it alive and the narrow beach was strewn with dead or wounded men. At the first shot, Mr. Grayson had thrown himself face downward behind the spar on which he had been seated and Mr. Wilson had flung himself backward in the same shelter.

"The dirty murderers!" exclaimed Mr. Wilson, as he saw the men being shot down. "Are they Indians, Grayson?"

"I don't know," muttered the scientist, as a bullet tore a splinter from the spar an inch from his head. "But I guess there's more truth than we thought in that Hun story. It looks like——"

"Hants oop, you swine!" a rough voice interrupted.

Extending their hands above their heads, the two men rose to see a burly German standing over them with a pair of ugly automatics pointed at their heads. Back of him stood two armed sailors, while forming a cordon around the little camp and its dead and wounded occupants, were a dozen more Germans, with threatening, leveled rifles.

"So-o!" hissed the German officer, as Mr. Wilson and the scientist rose and faced him. "You tink you comes here mitt der poat an' ve dondt

know it, eh? Gott, vy I dondt kill you I dondt know!"

"It's because you're too cowardly!" cried Mr. Grayson, his indignation overcoming his discretion. "You can shoot down helpless natives, but you haven't the nerve to kill a white man."

With a vile German oath, the officer swung his automatic and struck viciously at the scientist's head; but at the same instant, Mr. Wilson's fist shot out and, catching the officer on the point of his chin, sent him sprawling backwards.

He arose spluttering and cursing, his face purple with passion, and both men expected to be shot down without mercy, and clasped hands in a last farewell. But while the German leveled his pistols and cursed volubly in his native tongue, he refrained from shooting and, summoning some of his sailors, ordered the two Americans bound. Then, as the men seized their prisoners, the officer strode off and approaching the dead and wounded natives, brutally kicked them. Those who responded with a movement or groan he promptly killed by placing his pistol to their ears. Then, having murdered the last poor wretch, he issued a sharp order and half a dozen sailors advanced down the beach and, shoving off the schooner's boat, clambered in and rowed to the careened vessel. With boiling blood, but bound and helpless

to interfere, the two Americans witnessed the butchery of the wounded sailors.

"I can't understand why he didn't kill us!" exclaimed Mr. Grayson. "We certainly gave him provocation enough. Jove, what beasts these Huns are!"

"Thank God the boys were not here!" cried Mr. Wilson fervently. "I wonder where they are? Heaven alone knows what this brute will do with us or what the boys will think when they return. I'm nearly mad thinking of it, Grayson; but they're better off alone in the bush than as prisoners of the Germans."

"We'll have to hope for the best, old friend," replied the scientist. "The boys can't starve and they'll know we've been attacked by somebody and I'll bet they have sense enough to signal for the destroyer. Even if they don't sight her, they'll manage to attract some vessel."

"But they may search for us and be captured, too."

"Even so, I doubt if they'd be injured," declared Mr. Grayson. "There must be a reason for not killing us and the same would save the boys' lives. By Jove, Wilson, they're blowing up the schooner!"

The scientist's ejaculation was caused by the sight of the sailors hastily deserting the schooner while, trailing over her rail, was a sputtering fuse.

As the men reached the shore they darted for cover back of the trees, leaving the two Americans, bound and unable to move, to take their chances of being maimed or killed by flying timbers.

"Quick!" cried Mr. Grayson, as he realized the predicament they were in, "tumble over and roll close to the spar and bury your face in the sand! It's our only chance! I expect that damnable Hun thought he'd enjoy a bit of sport leaving us here."

Scarcely had the two captives rolled and squirmed their way to the partial protection of the big spar, when there was a heavy, dull explosion; a column of sand, water and splintered timbers rose high in air and, an instant later, splinters, planks and twisted iron work rained about the two Americans. Several heavy pieces struck within a few feet of them and one big section of keel actually crashed upon the spar which protected them, but, save for a few minor bruises and cuts, the two escaped unhurt.

As they raised their heads and gazed at the spot where the schooner had been, they saw naught but water, for, with the exception of a few pieces of floating planks, not a vestige of the schooner remained.

Approaching the two Americans, the German officer, apparently greatly chagrined to find they were alive and practically unwounded, ordered them to rise. Unmindful of the fact that this was

impossible, with feet and hands tied, he administered several hearty kicks and, calling a couple of his men, the captives were jerked roughly to their feet. In the meantime the other sailors had been rummaging through the little camp and, having collected all the stores of value, set fire to the rest.

The ropes were then removed from the Americans' legs and, closely guarded, they were marched into the bush. Less than half a mile had been traversed when the party emerged from the forest on a second beach where, drawn upon the sand and guarded by two sailors, was a gray naval cutter.

Without any delay the prisoners were ordered into the boat, the craft was shoved off and, propelled by a powerful motor, the cutter dashed across the narrow space of open water and slipped into a channel among the mangroves.

Twisting and turning, doubling on their tracks, and at times speeding across broad lagoons, the craft continued on its way until the two Americans were hopelessly confused and could not have found their way back had they been given the opportunity.

At last, the boat emerged from the mangroves and the Americans were amazed to see a large schooner-yacht anchored in the open water ahead. The cutter was run alongside the vessel and the

two prisoners were dragged onto her decks and roughly thrown down a companionway and the hatch closed after them. But in the brief moment during which they were on deck the scientist's quick eye had glimpsed a strange and surprising object lying close to the yacht on the opposite side from which they had arrived. "Did you see that, Wilson?" exclaimed Mr. Grayson as he picked himself up from the cabin floor.

"What do you mean?" queried the other as he rubbed his shins. "I know I saw stars as I struck this floor! These brutes must have adopted our army slogan of 'treat 'em rough'."

"I meant what was alongside," replied Mr. Grayson. "It's a U-boat!"

"By Jove!" ejaculated Mr. Wilson. "Then this is a Hun-base!"

"Surest thing you know!" laughed the scientist. "Did you think they were missionaries?"

For several hours they lay in the dark cabin, apparently forgotten, until, at last, a couple of sailors entered and proceeded to blindfold the captives who were then dragged on deck and tossed into a boat.

By the sound of the oars the two men realized that they were no longer in the cutter and an occasional overhanging bough, brushing against the boat, apprised them of the fact that they were being rowed along a narrow waterway.

Less than half an hour from the time they had left the yacht the boat bumped into the shore and the Americans were hauled out and found themselves on dry land. But where they were or what sort of country was about them was impossible to tell. Seizing them by their pinioned arms the sailors urged them forward and by the constant whipping and scratching of branches and thorns they knew they were treading a narrow, winding trail.

Presently a sharp challenge in German rang out and was answered by their captors; a short conference ensued and, a moment later, the bandages were removed from their eyes.

They were standing in a small clearing enclosed by a stockade of heavy logs and surrounded on every side with dense jungle. In the center, and mounted on a stout, rough-hewn platform a little higher than the stockade, was a rapid-fire gun and behind this was a low wooden building roofed with corrugated iron. A few yards to one side was a pen-like enclosure of logs, bound and topped with barbed wire and with its only opening guarded by armed men.

Towards this the prisoners were hustled and they had barely time to note the surroundings, and to see that at least a dozen Germans were patroling the place, when they were thrust into

the corral, and with a parting kick from their guards were thrown to the rough ground.

As they struggled to rise and spat the dirt from their mouths they noticed, for the first time, that they were not the only occupants of the prison-pen.

Squatting in the meager shade afforded by the log wall were four disconsolate-looking men, their garments torn and soiled, their faces streaked with dried blood and all showing signs of very rough handling. But despite their condition, it could easily be seen that all were sailors and all Anglo-Saxons.

"Well, we've companions in misery, I see," remarked the scientist cheerfully, and walking to the nearest of the sailors he turned his back. "Will you untie this confounded rope?" he asked.

The man rose quickly. "Sure!" he exclaimed. "Say, mate, what ship has them blarsted Huns sunk now?"

Another sailor busied himself with the ropes that bound Mr. Wilson's arms and all gathered about as the new arrivals briefly related their story to the accompaniment of muttered curses and threats from the other prisoners.

"Now let's hear where you boys came from," suggested Mr. Wilson when their tale was ended.

"We're all offen the *Swanee,*" replied a raw-

boned, tow-headed Yankee who evidently was the leader of the crew. "Say, you ain't got a chaw o' baccy on you, have you?"

Mr. Grayson drew forth his tobacco pouch and handed it to the fellow. "Help yourselves," he said, "but leave enough for a pipe for me."

Each of the sailors helped himself gingerly to a pinch of the tobacco and then, as the four pairs of jaws were working industriously, all seated themselves and the spokesman resumed his story.

"Tramp o' seven thousand tons, out o' Galveston for La Guaira, Saunders master," he continued. "Sighted the all-fired, dirty Hun 'bout forty miles offen the coast. Didn't give us no warnin', but jest let drive a torpeder first thing. Struck jest abaft the bridge and pretty near blew us clean outten the sea. Capt'n killed and no chance fer the engine-room gang. Us boys,—we was all standin' aft,—just flopped overboard and swum fer it. There wasn't no wreckage to cling to and we jest swum about, waitin' ter drown, when the Hun bobs up and orders us aboard. When we clumb aboard an officer stood there an' knocked us flat one after t'other an' had us tied up same as you gents. Then the dirty skunks brung us here three days back. Why the blazes they didn't kill us I don't know. Reckon they might as well, we ain't had nothin' but rotten dried bull an' water sence we come."

"You have had tough luck," declared Mr. Grayson, "but I can't see why they spared you and ourselves. It would have been easier to have no one to bother with."

"Perhaps they think it will go easier with them if they are caught," suggested Mr. Wilson.

"Did anyone ever know of a Hun having enough common sense to think such a thing?" replied the scientist. "No, I imagine they're keeping us to do some work. I do wonder where those boys are!"

Mr. Wilson sighed. "God grant they're safe!" he exclaimed.

For several hours the little cluster of prisoners squatted in the only shade and strove to find some comfort in relating stories of their experiences and discussing their probable future. Just before sundown two men entered the enclosure, one armed, the other bearing a trencher and a bucket and these he placed on the ground before the prisoners.

Black, rubber-like dried beef and water were the sole contents of the utensils and Mr. Grayson and Mr. Wilson were quite willing to leave their shares to the sailors.

By the time the apology for a meal was ended it was quite dark and the men threw themselves dispiritedly upon a pile of dried palm leaves which was the only bedding provided.

The sailors, accustomed to a rough life and rougher accommodations, soon dropped off to sleep, but Mr. Wilson and Mr. Grayson remained awake, the one worrying over the fate of the two boys and the other racking his brains in trying to devise some means of escaping.

The night was very still; only the chirp of insects, the distant croaks of frogs and the snores of the sailors breaking the silence, while ever and anon, the tread of a sentry could be heard as he paced back and forth at his post.

Suddenly several rifle shots rang through the night and, a moment later, the air reverberated to the sound of a distant, muffled explosion and the sailors awoke with a start while sharp cries issued from the stockade and lights flashed in the windows of the little building.

"Jove, I wonder what that was!" cried Mr. Wilson leaping up. "It wasn't far enough away for a ship being sunk."

"Hanged if I know!" replied the scientist. "Perhaps Benson's arrived on his destroyer; shouldn't wonder if the boys signaled him."

"Too heavy for a gunshot," declared the other, "though it might have been a torpedo or mine; but that wouldn't account for the rifle fire."

"Mebbe the dirty swabs have blown up their own craft," suggested a sailor.

But whatever the cause, the explosion had evi-

dently created great consternation among the Germans, for loud voices and excited tones could be heard on the other side of the pen's walls. There were no following explosions, however, and, ultimately, even the Americans dropped off to sleep.

They were aroused at dawn by the guard and were ordered out of the pen and having been lined up against the wall, where they were under the rifles of the Germans, they were shackled together in pairs with heavy chains around their ankles.

Maddened as they were at this indignity and cruelty there was no use in protesting, for all realized that they were helpless and must endure in patience or suffer far worse. When all had been shackled, they were marched out of the stockade and through a path cut in the forest until they came to a small stream with gravelly banks. Here they were halted and for the first time they realized why their lives had been spared. Across the stream, a rude dam had been constructed and near it were several trough-like affairs of boards with piles of gravel alongside. Just beyond was a little, shed-like structure and a small stockade, and with the entrance to the latter guarded by two armed sentries. In and out of the entrance to the stockade naked, brown-skinned Indians and ragged, unkempt white men were passing and bearing heavy sacks which they dumped onto the piles of gravel where other prisoners were shoveling

the gravel into the trough-like objects through which water was pouring.

"Now I understand!" cried the scientist as his eyes rapidly took in the surroundings. "We were wanted as laborers! They've a placer mine here and use their prisoners as slaves!"

At this instant one of the toiling Indians slipped on a round stone and, as he recovered his balance, he brushed against a German who was overseeing the work. With an oath, the latter raised a heavy cudgel he was carrying and rained blow after blow upon the Indian's back, shoulders and head. Without uttering a cry, or even a groan, the prisoner strove to ward off the blows but in vain, and with blood streaming from the wounds, he suddenly sprang forward, wrenched the club from the German and with a wild yell brought it crashing down on the Hun's head. There was a dull thud like the staving of a cask and the officer crumpled up like an empty sack, while, at the same instant, there was the sharp report of a rifle and the Indian sank lifeless beside the body of the German.

"Bully for the Indian!" exclaimed Mr. Wilson. "God, what damnable swine these Huns are!"

The six new prisoners had now reached the entrance to the stockade and passing within they saw a large shaft opening into the bank at the rear, and from which the captives were bearing the

sacks of gravel. Under the guns of a guard the white men were lined up, the shackles were removed from their ankles and they were handed shovels and driven into the mine.

In a way they were fortunate, for their work was to dig the gravel and fill the sacks and thus they were in comparative comfort in the cool interior of the shaft, while their more unfortunate fellows were compelled to tramp back and forth in the broiling sun and loaded down like pack animals. No conversation was permitted and the prisoners were forced to labor incessantly by the armed guard who stood over them and the slightest cessation of labor or a single word uttered resulted in a cruel blow.

At noon, work ceased for an hour and the prisoners were given meager rations of dried beef, pounded plantains and water and similar food was served at sundown. No shelter was provided, the building being used exclusively by the Germans, and the only bedding consisted of dried palm leaves thrown upon the ground.

After work was over at sundown, the white men gathered in a little group and, in low tones, compared notes and discussed various schemes for escaping, while the Indians, expressionless and with smoldering hate in their eyes, squatted by themselves and remained sullen and silent.

"If we're ever going to get out of here we'll need those Indians' help," declared Mr. Grayson. "I'm going to make friends with them."

Approaching the Indians the scientist addressed them in Caribbee and instantly the fellows' faces brightened and in a few moments Mr. Grayson was chatting with them on friendly terms. They had, it seemed, been captured through trickery, the Germans visiting their village and distributing rum and presents, and, as soon as the men were intoxicated, murdering the women and children and making the men prisoners. The scientist questioned them carefully and suggested that it might be possible for one of their number to escape and reach their fellow tribesmen and secure help to attack the Germans, and explaining that while he did not expect the Indians to win victory he thought that during the excitement of the attack the captives might escape.

The Indians listened attentively, but appeared to have little hopes of the success of the plan. They explained that it would be useless to expect the Mogollones, who were the nearest tribe, to aid, as they would certainly kill or make prisoners the white men who escaped; but that the "blancos" might be induced to come to their aid provided they could be reached. As for their own tribesmen, they were peaceful coastal people and were

so much in awe of the Germans that they would not dare attack them.

The scientist was intensely interested the moment the Indians mentioned the white tribe which they called "blancos," but he could gain no very definite information. All the Indians could tell him was that the tribe inhabited the hills some distance from the coast, that they were deadly enemies of the Mogollones, but friendly with other tribes, and that recently they had been led by a new chief whom they had rescued from the Mogollones.

By the time Mr. Grayson returned to his companions it had been agreed that at the first opportunity one of the Indians would slip away at night and strive to reach the mysterious tribe, and with this faint ray of hope the prisoners felt much relieved.

Day followed day, each being a nightmarish, torturing period of heart-breaking labor, the only change being that the gangs took turns working in the tunnel and carrying the heavy sacks to the sluices where the sand was washed and the gold and platinum it contained was gathered by the Germans.

On the second night an Indian disappeared and the Germans redoubled their vigilance and their severities, and all prisoners were chained each

evening. Then, one day, a German officer hurried into the camp, and evidently bearing news of great importance, for there was suppressed excitement among the officers and guards. Presently the captives were ordered to cease work and were herded together in the stockade and then, under heavy guard, were marched back through the forest to the pen where they first had been confined.

CHAPTER VI

A Narrow Escape

AS the boys, too amazed to speak, gazed upon the smoldering ruins of the camp, they could scarce believe their eyes. It seemed impossible that the schooner could have vanished and that no living soul was to be seen. Fred was the first to find his voice. "Oh, Rob!" he cried. "What *has* happened?" And then, as he caught sight of the huddled figures on the beach, "Look, Rob, there are dead men on the beach! Something awful's happened!"

"De'ils work!" exclaimed the Scotch lad. "I'm thinkin' 'tis the doin's o' yon Huns. Come alang, laddie, maybe there's a bit life left in yon puir lads."

Forgetting fear and caution, the two boys drove their cayuca ashore, and horror stricken at the sight, examined each of the bodies carefully, but found no signs of life. But the empty pistol shells

scattered about left no doubt as to the identity of the murderers and the bits of wreckage and splintered timbers from the schooner told only too well what had become of the vessel. Despite their inexpressible grief and amazement at what had occurred during their absence, the boys were somewhat relieved when they found that neither Mr. Wilson's nor the scientist's body was among the slain.

"They've been taken prisoners," declared Fred when the spot had been thoroughly searched without finding trace of the missing men. "They must have been taken away in the submarine."

"Hoot, mon!" exclaimed Rob. "Do ye no ken the sound o' shootin' an' the explosion we heard? 'Twas the Huns a-killin' o' these puir laddies and blowin' up the schooner, Fred! An' yon submarine could naw pass alang yon creek without makin' o' a muckle big wave; an' ye ken weel there was naw sich, lad."

"Yes, that's so," admitted Fred. "But then where *did* they go? Oh, dear, what can we do, Rob?"

"Fred, me lad," replied the other. "No boat went oot yon creek, we ken that. An' dinna ye mind as the captain, puir lad, said 'twas an island we're on? Hoot, mon, an island has more sides than one! Come alang, Fred, there'll be a wee bit trail a leadin' oot fra here!"

A few moments' search revealed the pathway through the bush, and following the plainly marked trail made by the men's heavy boots, the two boys cautiously made their way through the jungle until they came in sight of the beach where the Germans had moored their cutter. No one was in sight and convinced that there was nothing to fear, the two left the shelter of the bush and walked forwards across the beach. The sand was smooth and the imprints of so many feet were everywhere that it was impossible for the boys to tell the number of Germans who had landed.

But the tracks left by the party going to and returning from the trail showed that fully fifteen men had gone to the attack and that only two prisoners had been brought back, while the deep imprint of the cutter's keel proved how they had arrived and departed.

"We *must* find them," declared Fred when both were convinced that no more information could be obtained from the footprints. "The Huns must have come from that vessel or that house we saw and father and Mr. Grayson must be there. Even if we're taken prisoners it's better than staying here alone with all those dead men, and just think how Dad must be worrying over us."

"Aye, Fred, me lad," replied Rob shaking his head doubtfully. "I dinna doot he's worrit lad; but 'twill do naw good to put our ain heads i' the

same noose. 'Tis weel to find the spot where they are, but I mind 'twill be a lang search, laddie. Fra yon hill we could naw see naught but mangrove an', a wee bit o' masts an' roof an' ye ken the swamp's muckle big. 'Tis like a-searchin' i' a hay-rick for a bit needle, Fred."

"Yes, I know it does seem hopeless," agreed the other. "But we know the general direction of the ship and the house from here and if we keep on in the same general direction we may find it. We *must,* Rob; we simply *must!* Besides," he added, "the Huns went from here and they must have gone through pretty big creeks with their boat. We can bring the cayuca around here and follow the big channels and maybe we'll find some traces where the German boat went. Come on, Rob, anything's better than to sit here doing nothing."

There seemed no other way, and hurrying back over the trail, the boys reached their canoe and paddled rapidly across the lagoon searching for an opening in the mangroves which would lead them to the other side of the island. At last they discovered a tiny channel and, by pushing and hacking at the branches, gradually forced their little craft through the dense growth, and an hour later emerged near the beach where the Huns had landed.

The channel, through which the Germans had approached, was soon found, for it was the only

large creek, and with eyes intently examining every branch and tree for signs of the cutter's passage, the two boys paddled along the waterway. Over and over again the channels forked and divided, but luck was with the boys and, guided sometimes by a broken branch, sometimes by the still-wet banks where the cutter's wash had thrown the water, and still more often by some blind instinct the boys followed the course of the Hun craft.

They had proceeded thus for several hours and the sun was getting low in the west when Rob's quick ear caught a strange sound,—the creak and rattle of a block and tackle. "Hist, Fred!" he whispered, "did ye naw hear it? There's a boat yonder!"

Hardly had he spoken when the noise was repeated and with it came sounds of human voices.

Fred nodded. "They must be close ahead," he replied. "We must be careful! Let's crawl through the swamp and have a look."

Running the cayuca silently onto the mud the boys crept out and with the utmost caution, wormed their way among the maze of mangrove roots and branches. The mud was soft and slimy and gave out no sound; but it required the greatest care to avoid the dead and fallen limbs and pendent, aerial roots of the trees. At any other time the two would have hesitated to crawl through the

black and offensive mud, but now, with all their senses concentrated on their quest, they gave no heed and wallowed and squirmed through the slime until covered from head to foot with the sticky mud.

At last, through the openings among the trees, they glimpsed a stretch of open water and their hearts pounded with excitement as they peered forth from their hiding place and saw a large schooner yacht moored within a hundred yards of where they were concealed.

Beside the schooner was a power-cutter, and a small rowboat was just being lowered into the water from the davits. A moment later a couple of sailors entered the rowboat and drew her alongside the gangway and presently two blindfolded and pinioned men were half carried and half pushed into the waiting boat.

The two boys drew sharp breaths, for in the captives they had recognized Mr. Wilson and the scientist.

"They're taking them away!" whispered Fred. "Oh, dear, we're too late!"

"Hist!" cautioned Rob. "'Tis muckle glad we should be, lad. Had they stopped aboard yon schooner we'd ne'er found them. I'm minded yon Huns'll be transportin' them ashore to the wee cot we saw fra the islan'."

"But we don't know where that is and we can't

follow across that open water," objected Fred.

"Hoot, mon!" whispered Rob. "Canna we naw watch which creek they gang alang and go the same road after dark?"

"Yes, but I—look, Rob, they're lowering another boat!"

As Fred spoke, another boat was being lowered and presently a number of armed men sprang into it and pulled rapidly away from the schooner. The first boat had headed across the open water and was now entering a narrow channel in the mangroves and as the second boat took the same course the boys were convinced that all were bound for the same destination. On board the schooner all was silent and the vessel was apparently deserted.

"I wonder if they've left the schooner without any guard," remarked Fred.

"I dinna ken," replied the other, "but if they have yon launch would be a bonny wee ship to escape in,—if we could rescue your faither an' Mr. Grayson."

"Gosh!" exclaimed Fred. "I believe we *could* get that boat. We could sneak up after dark and tow it into the creek here and then we could get Dad and Mr. Grayson and the Huns couldn't catch us. Let's do it!"

"Hoot, but *'tis* a bonny plan!" chuckled Rob. "But mind ye, laddie, 'tis first catch your hare

before you cook him. Are ye thinkin' yon pirates will be deeleeverin' their prisoners for the askin'?"

"Well, we could get the launch anyway," persisted Fred. "Then if the Huns chased us they couldn't catch us."

"Aye, I'll grant 'twould be a wise plan to steal yon launch," admitted Rob. "Do ye naw think in her we'd best gang to yon island and signal for the destroyer?"

"But we must find where father and Mr. Grayson are first," insisted Fred. "Then we can signal and guide the destroyer's men back here."

"Provided yon destroyer sees us, lad," added the other.

The sun had now set and fearing to be caught in the swamp by darkness the two boys hurried back to their cayuca and cautiously slipped down the creek and waited in the shadows of the mangroves for nightfall. There was no light visible on the schooner and feeling sure that the Germans had left no one on guard the canoe was paddled noiselessly towards the vessel and reached her side in safety. Fred rose carefully until his head was above the yacht's rail and searched the shadowy deck for some sailor on watch; but the little ship was evidently deserted and the two rapidly untied the cutter's painter and towed her into the swamp. This done, they were about to start on their search

for the captured men when Rob remembered that they had not eaten since morning.

"Lad, but I'm fair famished!" he announced.

"So am I," agreed Fred. "I say, Rob, there must be food on the schooner! Let's go aboard and get something to eat! If anyone should come we can hear them long before they come near."

As there seemed to be no risk in this plan the cayuca was again run alongside the schooner and the boys, filled with excitement at the adventure, crept over the rails to the deck. Although they felt sure that nobody was on board, yet they had a strange, instinctive feeling that they were not alone and they spoke in whispers and moved furtively.

The companionway hatch was closed, but was unlocked, and the boys cautiously slid it back and listened breathlessly at the dark opening disclosed. Then, no sound issuing from within, they felt their way down the stairway to the cabin. Now that their eyes were accustomed to the darkness they could distinguish something of their surroundings and could see the indistinct outlines of doors and furnishings. In the center of the room was a table bearing a number of dishes and these, upon examination, proved to contain bread, a partly used roast ham and a quantity of fruit with an urn still filled with excellent coffee.

"Let's go on deck and eat," whispered Fred. "I don't like it down here in the dark and I'm afraid to strike a light. My, but it's creepy!"

Rob felt much the same way and hastily seizing all the provisions they could carry they hurried on deck, and squatting on the cabin roof, ate ravenously. Suddenly, from somewhere close at hand, came the subdued sound of voices. Rob's hand, holding a slice of ham, stopped half way to his mouth; Fred's jaws seemed paralyzed, and the hearts of both boys almost ceased to beat as terror stricken they sat, waiting in the darkness, powerless to move and expecting at every instant to see the Huns spring over the vessel's rails to the deck. But there was no sound of an approaching boat, no splash of oars and when the voices again became audible they seemed no nearer. By now the boys had somewhat recovered from their first shock and, slipping to the deck, crept to the rails and peered intently into the blackness of the tropic night and strained their ears for sounds of the Huns' boast; but save for the distant croaking of frogs, the shrill, weird cry of a nightbird and the gentle lapping of the ripples against the schooner's sides, not a sound broke the vast silence that brooded over swamp and lagoon.

"I'm sure I heard voices," whispered Fred. "Where can they be? Say, Rob, let's get away!"

"Hush!" breathed the other. "Listen, there they are again! They're on the ither side o' the schooner!"

Stealing across the decks, the boys lifted their heads cautiously above the rail and instantly both drew back with suppressed exclamations of wonder and surprise. Within ten feet of them the superstructure of a submarine rose to the level of the schooner's rails and from the open hatchway came the sounds of several voices.

"Gosh, it's the U-boat!" exclaimed Fred. "She's lying right alongside!"

Rob nodded. "Aye," he whispered in reply. "An' she's full o' Huns, lad!"

"And they might come out at any minute! Come along, Rob, let's beat it!"

Shaking with terror at the thought, the two scurried to their canoe, and pushing off, paddled rapidly across the lagoon in the direction taken by the Germans' boats.

Not until they had gained the shelter of the trees and were paddling up the creek did the boys breathe freely, for the thought that while they had been rummaging in the yacht's cabin the U-boat with its crew had been within a few yards, still terrorized them.

"Golly!" exclaimed Fred, when at last the open water had been left behind and the two stopped

to rest a moment. "That *was* a narrow escape! Suppose one of the Germans had come aboard the schooner while we were below!"

"Hoot, mon! a miss is as good as a mile ye ken," replied his companion. "An' I'm thinkin' yon Huns were havin' a wee 'Dock an' Doris' afore startin' oot a piratin' again. Didna ye note they were fair shoutin' an' guffawin', lad?"

"I'll bet that's it," agreed Fred. "Come to think of it, they did sound kind of drunk."

"Weel, 'tis wise to be a wee bit canny here," cautioned Rob, "your ain voice is a bit excited, Fred."

"And so was yours, a moment ago," replied Fred in subdued tones. "Now we must hurry and find where those Huns went."

Silently paddling up the channel, the boys kept their craft close to the black fringe of mangroves and listened attentively before rounding each bend. For nearly an hour they continued; the mangroves gave way to forest trees, the banks became higher and the boys realized they had reached the mainland. Then, so suddenly and unexpectedly that they almost cried out in surprise, the cayuca nearly bumped into the two German boats moored to the bank.

Hastily backing into the shadows, the boys listened breathlessly, for they fully expected that they had been seen; but as the minutes passed and

no sounds issued from the boats their confidence returned.

"I'll bet they left the boats deserted too!" declared Fred. "I say, Rob, we could cut them adrift and then the Huns couldn't chase us!"

Filled with the excitement at the idea, the boys silently approached the boats and, reaching out, Fred cut the painter of the nearest and dragging it into midstream left it to drift away with the current. The second boat was drawn partly upon the bank and to reach the painter Fred stepped from the cayuca into the Hun craft. "Hello!" he exclaimed in low tones. "There are a lot of boxes here! I wonder what they are."

Stooping close he tried to decipher the stenciled marks on the cases, but it was too dark to distinguish anything. The cover was loose on one box, however, and carefully pulling one of the boards aside he thrust in his hand and drew forth a cylindrical object and as its nature dawned upon him he uttered a low whistle. "Rob!" he whispered, "it's dynamite; a whole load of it and a big bundle of fuse too!"

"Well, 'tis not dynamite we're looking for," replied the other. "'Tis your father and Mr. Grayson. Hurry, laddie, an' cut the boat loose!"

But as Fred busied himself with the painter his thoughts were of the explosives and a daring scheme occurred to him. "Rob!" he exclaimed as

they dragged the second boat from the shore. "I've an idea! We can go back and blow up the schooner with that dynamite and then the Huns can't carry Dad and Mr. Grayson off and we can signal for the destroyer! Let's do it!"

Rob ceased paddling and looked at his comrade as if he thought him suddenly mad. "Are ye clean daffy, lad?" he asked. "Did ye no have fright enough when we saw yon U-boat before without gangin' alangside her again?"

But Fred was not to be so easily discouraged. "That's all the better if the sub *is* alongside," he declared. "Just as likely as not it'll sink her too. It wouldn't take but a minute to put the boat load of dynamite alongside and fire it. Just think what an adventure that would be, and how we'd be helping the Allies! Why, Rob, we'd be doing our bit to win the war!"

But Rob was still dubious. "An' ye'll not bother finding your father and Mr. Grayson?" he asked.

"Of course we will!" replied Fred. "We can tie this boat down the creek and then come back and find them and when we know where they are we can go and blow up the schooner and go out to the island and signal for the destroyer. Besides the noise of the explosion could be heard a long way and the destroyer might hear it and come close. It's a fine scheme, Rob! I'll bet it'll work!"

"Maybe," admitted Rob, to whom the wild idea

was beginning to appeal. "But what about yon Huns here in the bush?"

"They can't chase us without a boat; can they?" argued Fred. "That's the best of my scheme. They'll be marooned here and can't get away until the destroyer comes!"

"Hoot, mon, I dinna ken but you're right!" admitted the other. "I'm game for it, Fred, my lad. Come alang!"

So, in accordance with the mad scheme, the boat with the explosives was moored to an outjutting branch and the two boys pulled their cayuca ashore and soon found the pathway into the forest. But they had proceeded only a short distance when their ears caught the sound of distant voices and, thoroughly alarmed, the two turned and scurried back to the canoe and hastily embarking paddled the craft furiously down the stream.

"We're safe now," announced Fred. "But I wouldn't dare go back there, Rob; it's too risky. Besides, I don't see what good we could do even if we did find them. I vote we try to get help first."

"Aye," assented Rob. "I'm thinkin' the most important thing is not to get caught our ainsel's."

Towing the German boat, the boys paddled as rapidly as possible towards the lagoon, and making a wide turn, approached the ghostly-looking schooner from the opposite side to the U-boat.

As they slipped alongside they strained their ears for any sound but evidently those aboard the undersea boat had quieted down, or had retired for the night, for no voices were audible. Lashing the boat with its dangerous cargo under the counter of the schooner the boys attached a length of fuse to a stick dynamite and, striking a match, touched it off. At the very instant the report of a gun rang out from the distant forest, followed in quick succession by a second and a third, and the boys, realizing that the loss of the boats had been discovered and the alarm given, drove their paddles into the water in a frenzied effort to escape. But barely had their canoe cleared the schooner's stern when muffled shouts sounded from the submarine, a light flashed, there was a sharp, vicious bark of a pistol and a bullet splashed the water within a yard of the speeding canoe. Filled with unspeakable terror at being discovered, the boys paddled for their lives, not daring to look back; but from the sounds they knew the Huns were getting out a boat, while bullets sang overhead or plumped into the water all about and then, as they heard the splash of oars and the rattle of oar-locks they knew the Germans had given chase. At the same instant a blinding flood of light enveloped them and Fred grave a groan of despair.

"Searchlight!" he gasped. "It's all up, Rob!"

Even as he spoke a bullet splintered the edge of the cayuca, and the boys knew their minutes were numbered, when there was a deafening explosion, the searchlight was snuffed out, and the cayuca rocked and pitched upon the silent black waters.

Frightened almost out of their wits, weak from the strain of the past few moments and almost hysterical with relief at their sudden deliverance, the boys sank limply back, utterly unable to paddle or to speak.

Fred was the first to recover. "Gee!" he cried. "That *was* lucky!"

But all Rob could say was, "Hoot, mon! Hoot!"

"I'll bet that finished the sub too," declared Fred as the two regained some measure of composure. "That boat's not chasing us and everything's dark. Let's hurry up and get down to the island now!"

"An' do ye mind where yon islands are?" queried Rob. "'Tis dark as a pocket an' which way do we steer to gain yon creek where we left the launch?"

Fred gazed about helplessly. "I'm sure I don't know," he admitted. "But wherever we paddle we must find the shore and then we can follow along to the creek."

"Very well," assented Rob, shaking his head dubiously. "But I'm thinkin' 'twill be daybreak before we find our way oot, laddie."

However, anything was preferable to drifting about on the lagoon and the boys paddled slowly ahead, striving to keep a straight course.

"Seems to me it's an awful distance to shore," declared Fred after they had paddled steadily for half an hour or more.

"Aye, I was thinkin' the same," replied his comrade. "Maybe we're not going straight."

"I guess that must be it," agreed Fred. "We must be paddling in a circle. No, we're not; here's mangroves!"

As he spoke the heavier black of the trees became outlined against the sky and both boys breathed sighs of relief, for they were utterly exhausted. Deciding that before they continued their search for the cutter they would take a short rest, the cayuca was made fast to a drooping branch and the boys stretched themselves on the bottom of the canoe. In low tones they discussed the exciting events of the night, made their plans for signaling to the destroyer and wondered what the Germans and their prisoners had thought when they heard the explosion. They had no intention of dozing, but they had been through a strenuous day and night filled with adventure, excitement, and sorrow, and now, rocked gently in the canoe in the shelter of the mangroves, their tired eyes closed and soon both were sleeping soundly.

They awoke with a start to find the sun shin-

ing brightly and rubbed their eyes in wonder as they gazed about. They had gone to sleep with the cayuca moored to a mangrove on the shores of the lagoon, but now they found themselves upon a small lake-like expanse of water hemmed in on all sides by dense mangrove swamps. "Where —where are we?" cried Fred.

"I dinna ken," replied Rob. "We must ha' gone adrift in the nicht an' come here."

"Well, if we drifted in here there must be a creek and we can paddle out again," said Fred confidently. "My, but I'm hungry, Rob!"

To secure their breakfast was, however, the least of their troubles and within an hour they were dining on fresh fish and broiled pigeon and with appetites satisfied felt quite cheerful again.

But as they paddled along the shores of the tiny lagoon they began to realize the predicament they were in, for instead of one opening in the mangroves there were a score and the boys had not the least idea which was the one through which they had drifted as they slumbered.

Rob argued that if they had been carried by the current the channel which had a current flowing into the pond would be the one; but Fred pointed out that the tide might have turned and the current would then be flowing the opposite way. Then when they tried the creeks, they found that several had a current flowing in while others had

no current at all and Rob's idea was abandoned. Finally, it was decided that as it was all chance anyway they would choose the largest opening and accordingly, with each trying to encourage the other and both realizing they were lost, the boys paddled from the little lake-like lagoon up a winding channel through the swamps. For hour after hour they paddled on, trying to keep always in the main creek and momentarily expecting to come forth on the big lagoon. But the sun passed the meridian, the boys lunched on the remains of their breakfast and resumed their weary way, and the afternoon shadows lengthened with no sign of open water. Then, as the tired, heartsick boys had almost given up in despair the swamp ended abruptly and the cayuca shot out upon a broad expanse of smooth water. But their shouts of joy died on their lips as they looked upon the scene before them.

Half a mile distant, low, wooded hills rose from the water's edge; to the left was a rocky islet and to the right and behind them rose the dark green mangroves of the vast swamp that formed a crescent-shaped barrier about the lovely bay.

"We're hopelessly lost!" cried Fred in discouraged tones and voicing the thoughts which both had striven to keep back for hours. "I've never seen this place before and we haven't the least idea which way to go! Oh, dear! now we never

can signal the destroyer or find father and Mr. Grayson! And it's all on account of blowing up that schooner. It's all my fault, Rob!"

"Hoot, mon, dinna ye lose heart!" said Rob bravely. "'Tis many a worse place we've been in, Fred. Maybe if we climb yon hills we can see some spot we ken fra there. 'Tis no your fault, laddie, an' 'twas a fine brave stunt to blow yon schooner to bit and smash the U-boat. Come alang, Fred, 'twill soon be sundown an' we'll likely find a beastie o' some sort over yonder for our dinner."

Somewhat encouraged by his companion's words, Fred seized his paddle and the canoe rapidly approached the wooded shores. At one spot a narrow valley cut through the hills and in its center a broad sparkling river flowed between gravelly banks to the bay. At the mouth of this stream the boys ran the cayuca ashore and flinging themselves down drank long and eagerly of the fresh, cool water, for their canteens had been emptied early in the day and they had suffered greatly from thirst for hours. Greatly refreshed they rose and carrying their guns climbed up the banks of the river and found themselves in a little grassy savanna between the hills. They had gone scarcely a hundred yards when a deer sprang up a few rods distant and was promptly brought down by Rob. Game was very plentiful and as the boys retraced

their way to the canoe partridges, guans and pigeons constantly whirred from the grass and several more deer were seen.

"We'll not starve here at any rate," declared Fred as they sat broiling venison cutlets over their fire. "The place is full of game. I wonder if there are any Indians here?"

"If there were there wouldna' be so much game," replied Rob sagely. "An' there'd be huts or canoes about. No, Fred, I'm thinkin' we can sleep sound and not worry aboot Indians the nicht."

By the time they had dined the sun had set, and realizing it was too late to attempt to ascend a hill, the two boys stretched themselves upon the soft sand beside the river and discussed plans for the morrow.

But as night came on countless insects and innumerable crabs appeared and the boys were compelled to seek refuge in the canoe where, lulled by the songs of crickets, the piping of tree-frogs and the babbling of the river they soon feel asleep.

They were aroused with a start by the bumping of the canoe and both rose to a sitting posture wondering what had happened, and then, a low cry of amazement rose to their lips to be instantly repressed, for on every hand rose enormous forest trees; upon the bank beside them blazed a fire and, outlined against its ruddy glare and almost within arm's length, squatted two gigantic naked Indians!

ALMOST WITHIN ARM'S LENGTH SQUATTED TWO GIGANTIC INDIANS

CHAPTER VII

The Mogollones

NEVER in all their adventures had the two boys been so frightened before. To fall asleep confident of safety and to awake and find oneself a prisoner of savages in the heart of an unknown forest, is enough to try the stoutest nerves and the boys' nerves had already been strained almost to the breaking point. And to add to their terror were the tales of the Goajira Indians which they had heard. Not for an instant did the two doubt that their last hour had come and that presently the glowering redmen would seize them and slice off the soles of their feet, and, speechless with dread, they sat shivering with terror in the canoe.

Never had they seen such terrifying figures as their captors presented. Huge of stature, heavily muscled and nude, save for loin-cloths of scarlet,

the savages were frightful enough; but, in addition, they were made still more hideous by being painted from head to foot. One was inky-black with face and arms chalky-white; the other striped with scarlet and blue, while their long, black hair was festooned in a huge knot at one side of the head and fell over their shoulders like a heavy, black mane. Upon their wrists and ankles gleamed golden rings; big golden discs were suspended from their necks and on their heads they wore crowns of gaudy parrot feathers. Slung like bandoliers across their shoulders were strings of jaguar and wild-hog teeth, and in their hands they held long, powerful bows, barbed-headed arrows and stout lances or javelins.

That they were the dreaded Mogollones the boys felt sure and they wondered dully if the stories of their cannibalism were true and if the fire was to be used by the Indians for cooking them.

All this flashed through their brains in an instant, although to the boys it seemed an age, and then they shuddered as the Indians rose slowly and bending forward grasped their captives, and lifting them with one hand, tossed them on the shore.

Although his teeth chattered and his tongue felt parched and swollen, yet Fred bravely essayed to speak and stuttered out a few words in Spanish, but the Indians, if they understood, gave no heed

and bending over the boys felt of their garments and prodded and poked them as if they were great curiosities, the while conversing in low guttural tones.

Then, while one Indian squatted by the captives, the other stepped to the cayuca and returned bearing the boys' guns, machetes and other belongings. The machetes they promptly confiscated and placed in the belts of their breech-clouts, while the guns seemed to excite their curiosity. Presently, in handling the weapons, one of the savages pulled the trigger and with the roar of the discharge the two Indians threw themselves backwards and stood, very evidently frightened and surprised, staring at the guns. Then, finding nothing happened, they again approached the boys, but giving the guns a wide berth.

"I don't believe they know what guns are!" whispered Fred in a shaky voice.

"They ken weel eno'," replied Rob. "Did ye naw see yon de'il leap awa' when it fired? 'Tis a muckle reespect they have for guid powder an' shot, lad."

"That was the noise," answered Fred. "They didn't know how to hold the guns and just look at the way they sidle 'round them. I wonder if they're going to kill us or torture us."

Before Rob could reply one of the Indians,—he of the striped paint,—began to talk to Fred in a

low, guttural tongue. His words were, of course, utterly unintelligible to the boys; but by his gestures and expression they gathered that he was asking them questions regarding their presence and themselves.

Ever since the boys had witnessed Mr. Grayson conversing in sign language with their Indian captors in Costa Rica, the two had practised this useful and silent form of communication and the Scouts had all become quite expert at it. Here, however, was the first real chance they had had to put their skill to the test and, somewhat dubiously, Fred attempted to reply to the Indian by gestures. His efforts met with immediate success and the Indian's face showed plainly that he grasped the boy's meaning and as soon as Fred ceased he replied in the same manner; but his movements were so rapid and the signs so different from those to which the boys were accustomed that Fred was completely at a loss. Patiently the Indian repeated his gestures and little by little the boys grasped their meaning and ere long a more or less comprehensible means of communication was established. The Indians seemed very curious about the boys and whence they had come, and indeed, they appeared to regard them more in the light of strange specimens than as prisoners or enemies, while the boys were equally curious re-

garding their captors, and were still more anxious as to their ultimate fate.

"I don't believe they've ever seen white boys before!" declared Fred, during a lull in the sign conversation. "They can't understand why we are not brown or haven't beards. It's strange too, when they live so near the coast."

"Weel, ye mind Mr. Grayson told us no one tries to land hereabout," replied Rob. "An' I dinna blame them if yon savages are samples o' the denizens o' these parts. An' 'tis naw likely these braw laddies ha' spent their week-ends in the towns, ye ken."

"I wish I could ask him who they are and what they're going to do with us," said Fred. "Gosh, I wish this sign talk wasn't so limited!"

"I'm minded they're naw so savage as they look," said the other, "an' I dinna believe they'll murder us. Gi'n they minded to kill us they'd ha' done so lang agone, laddie."

"They *don't* seem very fierce," admitted Fred. "But perhaps they're just saving us for torture, or to eat."

"Hoot, mon! why dinna we ask him an' have the suspense over?" replied Rob. "I'll try my hand at yon game a wee bit."

Very painstakingly the Scotch boy commenced to gesticulate and striving to convey the question which was uppermost in both boys' minds.

He pointed to the fire and to himself, pointed to the Indians and made exaggerated motions with his jaws as if chewing; smacked his lips and patted his stomach and all so gravely and seriously that Fred, despite his nervousness, burst out laughing.

The Indians watched Rob gravely with expressionless faces and then, a light of understanding showing on their features, they approached the fire, stirred it into flames and drew the keen-edged machetes which they had captured from the boys.

"Now you *have* done it!" cried Fred in terrified tones. "They think you want them to eat us!"

But the Indians, instead of slaughtering the boys as the latter expected, stepped to one side, reached up to some object hanging to a limb of a near-by tree and commenced hacking at it with their machetes. An instant later they turned, each with a large piece of raw meat, and again stepped towards the fire.

"Gang awa, Fred!" exclaimed Rob. "The laddies think we're hungry an' they're broilin' joints for us. I mind they didna understand me but I'm no displeased; I'm fair famished, my lad!"

A moment later the Indians approached the boys with the smoking, broiled venison and squatted silent as statues while the hungry lads devoured the juicy meat.

They had almost finished when the sound of splashing water came from the river and instantly

one of the Indians leaped to his feet and uttered a low, quavering call. Immediately the call was repeated from down the stream and a moment later a big cayuca swept from the shadows into the ruddy reflection of the firelight.

The boys fairly gasped with amazement, for in the canoe were half a dozen Indians and as many women. Giving no heed to the boys, the two on shore hurried to the big cayuca and helped their comrades drag it on the bank, all the while talking excitedly and rapidly.

"That's what they've been waiting for before killing us!" exclaimed Fred. "They wanted to make a regular feast of it!"

"Weel, they left us the guns," replied Rob as he seized his weapon, "an' we can make a wee bit resistance at any rate."

Fred had also recovered his gun and both boys rose, and with backs to a huge tree-trunk, awaited the next move of the Indians and determined to fight for their lives to the last.

But the Indians showed no signs of hostility as they approached. The two who had captured the boys led their fellows towards the two frightened prisoners and keeping up a rapid conversation and pointing and gesticulating, while the new arrivals stood at a little distance and gazed at the boys with far more curiosity and awe than enmity.

Only one of the newcomers was armed, and

gradually the boys became somewhat reassured and breathed easier. By now, the women had disembarked and the boys noticed that each carried a loaded basket on her back suspended by a broad band of bark across the forehead. Placing the baskets on the ground the women scarcely glanced at the boys, but at once commenced cutting up and broiling the deer from which the boys had been served. Then, reaching into one of the baskets, a woman drew forth a handful of some coarse, gray substance and scattered it liberally over the half-cooked meat.

"Why, it's salt!" exclaimed Fred. "Now I know why these chaps are here. They've come down to the coast to make salt!"

"Weel, they're not sprinklin' it on *our* flesh," said Rob. "An' while there's life there's hope, ye ken."

The Mogollones had now settled themselves to the feast and the boys resumed their seats on the earth, watching the Indians intently and striving to catch the meaning of their words and gestures.

The meal over, the Indians gathered in a circle around the boys and carried on a long discussion and from their manner the captives were sure that they were the subject under consideration. The whole affair was carried on very gravely and the boys, despite their fears and nervousness, were greatly interested. Each Indian in turn would

make a long statement and at the close all the others would repeat his last word and would utter a long drawn "Oo—Yaa" in chorus.

Finally the matter appeared to be settled and the striped individual signed for the boys to rise and enter the big canoe; the women picked up their baskets and stowed them and the men followed, pushing the craft into the stream and seizing their paddles.

"I *would* like to know where we're bound for," said Fred as the cayuca swept upstream and into the black shadows of the forest.

"Bide a wee an' we'll ken richt enough," replied Rob. "Hoot, laddie, but we're having our full o' adventure."

For several hours the cayuca sped on, grazing jutting rocks, turning sharply around bends and avoiding snags in what seemed to the boys a miraculous manner, for, in the inky blackness, they could not see a yard in any direction. Then, with a sharp cry, the Indians backed water so suddenly that the boys all but lost their balance and at the same instant there was a blood-curdling scream from above and the boys, with strange, tingling sensations of their scalps, looked up to see two luminous green eyes blazing from the black mass of foliage over the river. Almost unconsciously, the boys threw up their guns and fired. At the flash and roar, the women screamed and dropped

flat, the men uttered startled yells and cowered back and with a gurgling cry some huge body splashed into the river scarce six feet from the canoe.

At this sound the Indians uttered exclamations of surprise and wonder, and swinging the cayuca about, gazed intently at the water. A moment later, two of them dropped their paddles and reaching out drew an immense jaguar over the edge of the canoe.

As the limp, spotted body slid into the cayuca the Indians grew wildly excited, jabbering and gesticulating and jumping about, until it seemed certain they would capsize the craft.

"I told you they'd never seen a gun!" exclaimed Fred. "They've just gone crazy over that jaguar. My, isn't he a whopper!"

"Aye, I'm thinkin' mysel' 'tis a new diversion for them," assented Rob. "They did seem fair fashed at the report. An' 'tis so, laddie, we'll be muckle more feared than hurt."

By now the Indians had quieted down and resumed their way, but ever and anon conversing in low tones and turning wondering faces towards the two boys.

At last the blackness that hemmed in the canoe became less dense, the faint outlines of trees and foliage were visible, the sky grew pink and mauve and in a flash day had dawned. Presently, the

WITH A GURGLING CRY SOME HUGE BODY SPLASHED INTO THE RIVER

cayuca was run upon a sandbank and while some of the Indians commenced building a fire, others slipped into the forest. Much to the boys' surprise the women proceeded to light the fire by rubbing two sticks together, for although the Scouts had often practised making fire by means of a bow-drill and fire-block they had never seen it obtained in the primitive method of these Indians.

Holding a short piece of dry wood between her feet the Indian woman placed a pointed stick in a tiny notch in its surface and rapidly twirled the spindle between her palms. In less than a minute the stick commenced to smoke, the little pile of pulverized wood-dust glowed, and placing a bit of dry palm bark over it, the woman rapidly blew it into a flame.

While this had been going on several of the women had waded into the river, and up to their waists in water, were dipping their hands into the stream as if searching for something. By the time the fire was blazing these women returned to shore, each carrying a small basket filled with crayfish and before these had been cooked the men appeared from the forest carrying a small deer and a wild turkey.

Breakfast over, the cayuca was again headed up-stream. Soon the river grew wider with numerous small, rocky islands between which the water rushed in foaming rapids and small cataracts.

Through these the Indians dragged the canoe, leaping into the water up to their chins, tugging, hauling and lifting, and inch by inch winning their way into the more tranquil spaces above. Up from the river banks rose the dense forest, a solid, unbroken wall a hundred feet or more in height and of a myriad shades of green, while, here and there, the giant trees were glorious masses of purple, scarlet, white or golden blossoms which, dropping to the river, had transformed its surface to a carpet of wondrous hues. At every turn some new or novel sight was revealed and the boys constantly uttered exclamations of wonder and admiration, for never in all their experiences in Central America had they beheld such marvelous forest scenery. Then, at last, the cayuca was swung from the river into a narrow stream and through a veritable tunnel of green the journey was continued for several hours, when the forest ended abruptly and on every hand stretched broad, grassy savannas dotted with island-like clumps of trees and palms. In the far distance rose lofty mountains, their summits wreathed in clouds, and through the center of the savanna flowed the winding, silvery stream along which the canoe sped on. Everywhere along the grassy banks great alligators dozed and slipped clumsily into the water at the cayuca's approach; immense flocks of ducks rose from the sedge and wheeled overhead in clouds; huge white jabiru

storks posed majestically and gazed curiously at the passing craft; deer leaped from the water-side and sped bounding through the lush grass, and flocks of gaudy macaws and noisy, bright-hued parroquets screeched and screamed at the intruders from the spiny palm trees by the river-side.

It was marvelously interesting and novel to the boys and they quite forgot the predicament they were in as they watched the multitude of strange birds and the ever-shifting panorama. About half way across the savanna the Indians headed into the long grass, and pushing through, moored the cayuca among half a dozen canoes in a hidden pool.

"Now we're going to their village!" exclaimed Fred as the party disembarked. "Perhaps they'll kill us here!"

"Hoot, mon, don't be croakin'!" replied Rob rather impatiently. "Ye're too pessimeestic, lad. More like they'll be a bobbin' o' their pates to us as superior bein's, or I'm no Scot."

From the landing place a well-beaten path led across the savannas and over this the Indians led the way, followed by the two boys, with the women in the rear. The grass rose above the boys' eyes and they had no idea of their surroundings or of the direction they were taking and several times the trail forked; but after an hour's tramp one of the forested hummocks rose before them, and

passing through the outer rim of trees, they came suddenly upon the Indian village.

For a space of an acre the surface of the hummock had been cleared and transformed into a level expanse of soft, white sand and, scattered over this and forming a rude square about it, were a score or so of well-built, wattled houses thatched with palm leaves. Here and there in the shade of thatched roofed sheds women were busy grinding corn on stone slabs, baking cassava cakes or weaving hammocks, while little knots of men were scraping bows and winding arrows, and naked, brown-skinned children romped and played everywhere in the baking, glaring sand. But at sight of the new arrivals, men and children gathered about, questioning and talking, while the women left their work to gaze curiously at the prisoners and gossip with the women carrying the salt. The jaguar skin was exhibited and the story of its killing related and, by their grunts and exclamations, the boys knew the hearers were expressing their surprise at the tale. Presently, however, the children resumed their play, the men returned to their various tasks and the striped Indian signed for the boys to follow, and led them to a small house near the center of the village. The place was vacant and the Indian made it clear that this was to be the prisoners' home. The only furnishings were several gourds and calabashes and a huge red earthen

water jar; but in a moment, a woman approached carrying hammocks, which were slung from the posts, and a second woman brought a huge calabash full of steaming hot food.

"Well, they don't seem to be such a bad lot after all," announced Fred, as the two hungry boys regaled themselves with the thick stew. "They haven't tied us and we have our guns and a good house and plenty of food and——"

"'Tis fair marvelous! You're not thinkin' they're fattening us for a feast?" interrupted Rob, with a chuckle.

"Perhaps they are," replied Fred, grinning, "but at any rate I'd rather be killed with a full stomach than hungry!"

Apparently no one had been left to guard them, but they had scarcely finished their meal when the striped Indian arrived, accompanied by two particularly ugly companions, and indicated to the boys that they were to follow him. Fred and Rob noticed that the newcomers were armed with spears and bows, and once more they were filled with forebodings; but the men made no hostile move and merely trudged beside the two boys as they crossed the sandy space and approached a large, circular, open shed-like structure with an enormous, hideous wooden idol standing before it. In the center of the hut was a bed of glowing coals, enclosed by a circle of stones, and seated on an

elaborately carved wooden stool was a very stout, wrinkled Indian, whose gray hair stood out like a shaggy mane about his face, the sinister expression of which was further heightened by being painted sky blue, with scarlet circles around eyes and mouth. Great ropes of teeth were wound about his neck, heavy gold bands encircled his arms, wrists and ankles; his crown of blue and scarlet feathers was bound with gold and an immense uncut emerald blazed in the center of a gold disc on his chest.

"He's the chief!" ejaculated Fred as he caught sight of the old man. "Now we'll——" his words died on his lips and he gave a short cry of horror as his glance took in the interior of the place. Hung to the rafters, and forming a complete circle around the interior of the building, were scores of grinning, white human skulls! Rob, too, started and shuddered at the sight and both boys stood rooted to the spot, gazing wide-eyed and spell-bound at the grizzly ornaments. "They *are* cannibals!" exclaimed Fred in awestruck tones, and for once Rob could make no reply.

But the next moment the boys' attentions were drawn to the chief, who was speaking in high, quavering tones to the striped Indian and, as he spoke, Indian after Indian appeared to materialize from nowhere until eight had seated themselves about the central fire. For some time the

conversation continued and then the armed guards seized the boys' arms and led them to the chief. The two boys, white and shaking with dread, felt instinctively that their fate lay in the hands of the ugly old chief who peered at them closely, touched and fingered their garments and pinched their arms and faces. Then, turning to the assembled men, he addressed them, and the boys caught the word "Mygones," used over and over again. As the chief ceased speaking there was a buzz of conversation among the listeners and presently one of the number rose and spoke to the chief. At his words the old man nodded and signaled to one of the armed men, who slipped from the hut and, an instant later, returned carrying a heavy, dark-colored stick. This he handed to the boys, who looked at it curiously and absolutely at a loss as to what was expected. Then the striped Indian approached and by sign language indicated that the chief wished to see them shoot. "Gosh!" exclaimed Fred, as the man's meaning dawned upon him. "They think we can make any old stick shoot! What are we going to do?"

"I'm thinkin' 'tis up to us to make good, lad," replied Rob. "An' we dinna' yon old ape will be pickin' our bones wi' guid relish."

"But we can't," objected Fred, his voice breaking. "Oh, why *didn't* we bring our guns?"

But the Scotch lad's brains had been working

rapidly and now a brilliant idea, which might succeed, had occurred to him. "Gi' me the cudgel!" he exclaimed, "an' dinna say there's no brains 'neath a hielan' bonnet!"

Seizing the stick, Rob stepped back and as he passed the fire, he surreptitiously dropped a cartridge among the red hot coals, then, throwing the stick to his shoulder like a gun, he leaped aside and pointed it at the fire. Almost instantly there was a loud report; a flash of light, and blazing firebrands flew in every direction. Rob glanced about triumphantly and then burst into a roar of laughter, for the place was vacant save for Fred, and the fat chief was running for his life and leading all his fellows in a mad race across the sand.

"That *was* great!" cried Fred. "Gee, Rob, you *are* a genius! I'll bet they think we're wizards or something!"

"Aye," replied the other. "'Tis all veery weel for the nonce, lad; but supposin' yon fatty takes it into his ugly head to gi' us a stick when there's no fire!"

"They're too scared for that," declared Fred, confidently. "I'll bet they won't dare kill us now."

"Weel, we're free to go, I'm thinkin'," remarked Rob. "Hoot, mon, but these skulls gi' me the creeps! Come alang, Fred, we'll gang to our wee bit cot yonder."

No one interfered with the boys as they left

the council house and walked across the sand towards their hut, and indeed, the Indians all scuttled out of sight as they approached with Rob carrying the black stick across his shoulder.

But before they gained their house two Indians dashed from the bush and ran at full speed across the clearing, shouting as they sped, and in an instant all was confusion and excitement. From every hut and shed men, women and children appeared, all hurrying towards the council house, where a crowd had gathered about the newcomers and the fat chief.

"I wonder what's up now?" cried Fred. "Come on, Rob, let's see!"

Hurrying back the two boys joined the throng, which buzzed like an angry hive of bees, while in the center was the chief and the two panting runners talking earnestly and rapidly,

"I mind 'tis something o' great importance," remarked Rob. "Fra' the way they're gabblin' 'twould be nothing short o' the signing of peace!"

"I'd give a lot to know what they *are* talking about," declared Fred. "All I can hear is that funny word, 'Mygone.' I wonder what that means, anyway?"

"Weel, I'd gi' more if 'twas me gone," chuckled Rob.

"Say, let's go now!" cried Fred. "They're all so busy they'd never miss us. We can run to the

canoes and get off down the river and all we'll have to do is follow the current. Come on, Rob!"

"Hoot, mon! 'Tis a fine chance," agreed Rob and, scurrying from the crowd, the two boys dashed to their hut, seized their guns and, all unnoticed by the Indians, dashed into the brush and along the pathway through the grass. It was nearly sundown and the boys realized that if they could but evade capture until dark, their chances for escape were excellent. They reached the canoes in safety, selected the smallest and, a moment later, were paddling madly down stream and keeping close to the banks for fear the Indians might sight them; but there was no sign or sound of pursuit and, as the sun sank below the distant mountains and the two fugitives drove their canoe into the tunnel-like opening in the forest, they felt that they were reasonably safe at last.

But they had a long distance to travel yet and realized that the big cayuca filled with Indians could overtake them if they ceased their efforts for an instant and untiringly they drove the canoe at full speed. Here, hemmed in by the dense forest, it was very dark and the boys could scarce distinguish the black waters of the river from the blacker jungle of the shores; but they strained their eyes to pierce the shadows and to avoid snags and rocks, and had nearly gained the main river when, with a sickening crash, the canoe struck a

submerged log and the boys were thrown forward on their faces. Hurriedly picking themselves up, they strove to free their craft, but the cayuca was wedged fast and all their efforts were in vain. "Oh, dear!" cried Fred. "Now we *are* in a fix! They'll catch us sure!"

And, as if in answer to his words, came the splash of paddles and the next instant a cayuca, manned by three Indians, swept alongside the stranded canoe.

CHAPTER VIII

Benson Takes a Hand

SOMETHING certainly *has* gone wrong," declared Mr. Wilson when, on the second morning the prisoners were still left in their pen and were not sent to the mine. "I'm beginning to think Sailor Joe's remark about the sub blowing up may have been near the mark."

"Something blew up, at all events," replied the scientist. "It was far too loud for a gun or a mine and was too near for a vessel being destroyed by the U-boat,—within the lagoon at any rate, I should say. And these Huns are busy as bees about something they don't want us to know."

"I been spyin' of 'em," announced the lanky sailor, Joe. "Most all hands cleared off yisterday 'bout two bells an' come back just after sundown a carryin' of a cargo o' some sort. This mornin' they've gone again."

"They may be bringing up supplies from the schooner," suggested Mr. Wilson. "Although I'm surprised they don't make us do the work. Do you suppose there's any chance of that Indian bringing help?"

"Just one chance in a thousand," replied Mr. Grayson. "If he doesn't celebrate his freedom by getting drunk on chicha or palm wine among his own tribesmen, and forget all about us, he'll undoubtedly gather in some of his friends and do his best to reach the 'Blancos'; but you must remember he'll have to go through the Mogollon country to reach them."

"I only wish I knew where the boys are," sighed Mr. Wilson. "Nothing else troubles me. Why, even if they were here I believe it would be better than the uncertainty."

"No it wouldn't," his companion declared. "I'd far rather have those boys out in the mangroves or in the bush than rotting here, Wilson."

"Yes, in some ways you're right," replied the other. "But I'm constantly thinking of those Indians you told about. I'm so afraid the boys will go into the bush searching for us and will run afoul of some hostile savages. It makes me faint to think of what might happen to them."

"Don't fret about that," the scientist said, reassuringly. "Even if they went into the bush and should meet Indians they wouldn't be hostile. The

coastal districts are inhabited by these meek, submissive creatures we have as fellow-prisoners. Why, they haven't even ambition or pluck enough to attempt to escape. They're of Warrau stock, a tribe rated as the lowest intellectually of all the races of northern South America. On the other hand, the Mogollones are probably one of the offshoots of the Caribs, who are famed for their savage fighting qualities and have always been cannibals and look upon every other tribe and race as natural enemies and excellent meat. But they seldom come near the coasts, according to the Indians I have talked with here, and then only by one river down which they travel from their villages on the interior savannas in order to secure salt from a natural salt-pan near the river's mouth."

"You are comforting," exclaimed Mr. Wilson, sarcastically. "First you cheer me by saying the boys can't run up against the savages and then you calmly inform me that if they stray to this river they might be caught by cannibals."

The scientist laughed. "Hardly a chance of that," he declared. "According to the Indians, the river is miles away to the eastward and there are impenetrable mangrove swamps between here and its mouth. There's no reason for the boys going in that direction; they'd either search about in this immediate vicinity or else try to reach Rio

Hacha to the west, always providing, of course, they didn't try to signal the destroyer and didn't succeed. No, old friend, there's no need to worry over the boys, as far as Indians are concerned."

At this moment the sailor, Joe, beckoned frantically from where he was peering through an opening between the logs of the stockade and the two rose and hurried to his side.

"They're a comin' back!" announced the sailor. "Look-a-here, sirs; they're every man jack on'm loaded to the hatches! Lor' love me, but there's a bunch of 'em a-carryin' of a gun!"

The scientist and Mr. Wilson were now peering through chinks in the wall and could see several German sailors emerging from the trail and each with a bundle, box or bale upon his shoulder, while behind them came half a dozen more with a rapid-fire gun slung to stout poles.

"Must be bringing supplies and armament from the schooner," muttered Mr. Grayson. "Hello, there's another gun!"

"And a searchlight!" added Mr. Wilson. "Why, they must be stripping the schooner!"

"Or else——" commenced the scientist. "By Jove! I have it! This stuff is salvage! See the way that searchlight's bent and dented? I'll bet the schooner was loaded with explosives and blew up and these chaps are saving what they can!"

"Shouldn't wonder if you're right, Grayson,"

cried Mr. Wilson. "I wonder what became of the U-boat?"

"If she was alongside she's likely sunk, or at least disabled," replied the other. "But of course she may have left before the explosion occurred."

"S'help me!" ejaculated Joe, slapping his thigh. "I'm a Dutchman if the blarsted sub ain't stove in! That there searchlight's offen no schooner, nor them guns, neither. I'm blind as a bat if they ain't from them skunks' murder-machine,—I was three days aboard her an' they look right familiar to me!"

"Let us hope so," remarked Mr. Wilson. "But it doesn't help our plight much. Hello, they're mounting the guns!"

"Looks as though they expected trouble," commented the scientist as he watched the Germans busily hoisting the guns to platforms they had erected. "I expect they're in a worse fix than we think. Unless there's another U-boat that uses this base, they're likely to be marooned here till the end of the war."

"Couldn't they get to Rio Hacha in their launch?" asked Mr. Wilson.

"Probably she went to pieces with the schooner," replied the other. "But they have other boats. Perhaps they intend to send a boat's crew to Rio Hacha and get a schooner over here to rescue them."

"I'm surprised they didn't have a wireless," remarked Mr. Wilson, "not only for communicating with the U-boat but for intercepting messages."

"Too risky," replied Mr. Grayson. "They know the coast's patroled and a wireless message might give them away. Look out! Here comes our dinner!"

Hurriedly the three withdrew from their peepholes and seated themselves with the other prisoners just as the afternoon rations of dried beef and tepid water were brought into the pen.

Early the following morning, the watchers hurried to their crevices in the wall, curious to see what their captors were doing. At the first glance, Mr. Grayson uttered a low whistle of surprise. "Look here, Wilson!" he exclaimed. "They're putting up an aerial for their wireless!"

"That's so," agreed Mr. Wilson, peering out at the Germans, who had raised two tall poles or spars above the trees and to which they were stringing wires. "I suppose," he added, "they are willing to risk getting caught in order to summon help. Probably they have a code arranged in the Colombian towns. By the way, Grayson, accept my apologies for scoffing at your suspicions of our Alcalde. Guess he knew all about these chaps here."

"Don't mention it," replied the scientist, laughing. "But I don't imagine our jailers are going

to talk with Nuñez; more likely there's another Hun base along the coast, or an additional U-boat in the Caribbean. Or perhaps they don't intend to send, but will just listen in to see if the coast is clear." But whatever the Huns' plans may have been will never be known, for at that moment there were shouts from the direction of the trail and three men dashed into the stockade calling excitedly in German and then, as an officer appeared in the doorway of the hut, they came to an abrupt halt, clicked heels together and came to a stiff salute.

"News of some sort!" exclaimed Mr. Wilson. "Those chaps looked frightened. I wonder——" A strange sound, half hiss, half screech, interrupted his words; there was a blinding flash and a dense mass of yellowish-white smoke burst from the doorway of the hut with a deafening detonation. The three watchers staggered back with the shock of the concussion. "Shell!" gasped Mr. Grayson. "Gad, Wilson, they're attacked!"

Scarcely had he finished speaking when there was a second explosion, as another shell fell within the stockade and, oblivious to their own danger or the risk they ran, every white prisoner rushed to the walls and pressed his face against the logs, striving to get a glimpse of the scene without.

The little building was shattered and its splintered timbers and twisted iron-roofing were piled

confusedly together, while sprawled in grotesque attitudes a few feet distant, were the bodies of the officer and three men. One of the wireless masts had been severed and hung swaying by its wires, while a gun platform had been torn from its foundations and lay, with its gun pointing skyward, with several dead Germans pinned beneath it. Of the remaining Germans several were wounded and lay bleeding and groaning on the ground, while others were running about, yelling orders and cursing with all discipline forgotten. As the prisoners' eyes swept the stockade and, at a glance, took in the havoc wrought, a third shell screeched through the air and struck just within the entrance. As the heavy smoke slowly drifted away, the demoralized Huns dashed forward, and leaping across the pit formed by the shell, ran madly into the bush. But the last had scarcely disappeared when there were the sharp, staccato reports of rifles from the forest, followed by terrified cries, and the Germans came rushing back, while close at their heels, charged a squad of white-clad, khaki-legginged bluejackets. The Germans, penned in their own stockade, threw up their hands with shouts of "Kamerad!" and a bluejacket ran to the solitary wireless pole and commenced shinnying up the spar with a tiny ball of bunting slung on his back. But long ere he had gained the top and the Stars and Stripes fluttered

in the breeze, the captives had dashed from their pen and with shouts of joy were wringing the hand of the coatless young officer in command of the squad, while his bronzed boys looked on with impassive faces, as though capturing a Hun base and freeing American prisoners was an every-day affair.

"I suppose you're Mr. Wilson and Mr. Grayson," said the lieutenant, after the first impulsive greetings were over. "De Witt, of C-2, told us you were here somewhere and asked us to stand close in and watch for signals. I suppose the Huns got you before you had a chance to let us know. Weren't there four in your party?"

"Haven't you seen the boys? Didn't they signal you? How did you locate us then?" exclaimed Mr. Wilson in anxious tones.

"No," replied the officer. "We haven't seen any boys or any signals,—except those the Huns themselves gave us," he added with a laugh. "You see," he explained, "we heard a heavy explosion a few nights ago and a flare in the sky and stood in to see what it was, and found the lagoon. Everything was quiet, but we picked up some pieces of floating wreckage and knew there was something queer going on and a boat's crew ran across some bodies near a pile of burnt canvas and supplies on a beach back among the mangroves and located your schooner, which had been blown up. But

that hadn't been done the night before and we couldn't make it out. Then we landed a crew on a high island off the lagoon entrance to see if they could pick up anything back in the swamps, and they picked up a heap. Found a submerged cave with a landing ladder and field telephone with a wire running up to the top of the hill, and made out the roof of a house back in the bush; but nothing that looked like a base or a U-boat in sight. We decided to send a boat in to investigate, for you see we didn't dare shell it on suspicion,—might have been a native house for all we knew; but the boat's crew couldn't locate the place and couldn't find a way through the swamp even when we signaled from the island. Spent a couple of days at it and were just giving up when our boys on the island wigwagged that an aerial was going up over the roof. That looked good to us and we stood up the lagoon to drop a few shells in and then, just by bull luck, our boat's crew found a channel and came within an ace of catching a boat full of Huns salvaging a wreck. But the Boches got away up the stream and our boys hustled back for reinforcements. Then Benson dropped three shells here and was to wait fifteen minutes to see if we took it. That's all. Mighty glad we helped you out, gentlemen! If you're ready we'll go aboard." A few sharp orders and the squad of bluejackets tramped out through the

trail, the captives in their midst, while, in the rear, were the six unkempt but happy ex-prisoners.

As the navy cutters swept down the river, Mr. Grayson and Mr. Wilson told their story and asked many questions of the young officer in command.

"Can't imagine what blew up their ship," he declared in reply to a query from the scientist. "But 'twas darned lucky for you chaps and us. Wouldn't have guessed there was a thing here if we hadn't heard it. And it got their sub, too! Her superstructure's standing above water; noticed it as we came in. There she is now!"

The boats had now reached open water and the wreck of the yacht was plainly visible with the dull-gray conning tower of the sunken U-boat beside it.

"Guess we'll run alongside," remarked the lieutenant. "Have to report details," and at his order the cutter spun around and in a few moments was resting motionless beside the mass of spars and rigging which had once been the trim German schooner.

"Must have been an internal explosion," declared the officer, after a careful examination. "Stern blown clean out of her and whole after deck gone and port side blown out! That's what got the U-boat! Sort of depth charge effect. Ex-

pect the schooner was full of high explosives and torpedoes and the sub was taking them on when something dropped."

Leaving the wreck, the boats followed a tortuous channel through the mangroves and emerged on a large lagoon with the speedy, vicious, camouflaged destroyer swinging to anchor a hundred yards distant. As the boats swung alongside and the rescued men reached the deck, a bare-headed, bronze-faced, shirt-sleeved young man dropped the fish line he was dangling over the side and hurried forward. Saluting, the officer who had led the landing party, introduced his companion.

"Mr. Wilson, Lieutenant Benson; Mr. Grayson, Lieutenant Benson."

"Mighty glad to meet you, gentlemen!" declared the commander of the destroyer as he grasped their hands. "Glad we've been of service to you!" Then, glancing at the prisoners and addressing his brother officer, "Must have cleaned up pretty well, Frank!" he exclaimed.

"You bet we did, Rex!" replied the other. "Your shells knocked the whole place gally west and killed most of the bunch. Only eighteen prisoners and six of them wounded! Say, old man, their supply ship blew up and sunk their sub; what do you know about that?"

"Good work!" ejaculated the commander.

"Come on, gentlemen, and have something to eat; you look half starved. We can talk better while we eat."

As the party gathered about the tiny table in the tinier dining-room and the two civilians ate the first square meal they had had for days, they related the story of their experiences and ended with a plea for the aid of the destroyer's men in making a search for the missing boys.

"Sure thing!" the commander assured them. "That's what we're for,—to help Americans and kill Huns. But frankly, I'm afraid we'll have *some* hunt. Surely the boys must have heard the explosion and if they didn't locate it they'd have heard our guns and shells this morning. If they're anywhere near they should have shown up by now."

"They may be lost and can't find their way out here," suggested Lieutenant Sargeant. "If we circle the lagoon and fire a few guns they may locate us or they can reply with their guns and we can trace them."

"I fear they've landed and are in the forest," said Mr. Wilson. "But even so, they should have heard the firing and would guide themselves by that, unless they're helpless."

"They may not have had time yet," suggested the scientist. "If we remain here a day or two while searching for them it will give them time

to travel some distance and the shots from the searchers will guide them."

It was still early in the afternoon and, the meal over, it was decided that no time should be lost, but that two boats should explore the shores of the smaller lagoon, where the yacht had been sunk, while the destroyer returned to the island to take off the men left there. The latter reported that they had seen no small boat or canoe on any of the creeks or lagoons within their view and the searching party returned with a German power-cutter, but without the boys. The launch, they said, had been discovered moored to a mangrove in a narrow channel near the wrecked yacht; but no one could even suggest a theory to account for it being there.

CHAPTER IX

Frightful Experiences

AS THE Mogollones' canoe swept alongside the stranded cayuca, the two boys sank back with hopeless groans to await their fate, for so unexpected had been the arrival of the Indians and so swift their descent upon the fugitives, that the boys were utterly dumfounded and did not even have the presence of mind to seize their guns.

And the appearance of the Indians was by no means reassuring, for they were fully armed and at sight of the boys one of the three dropped his paddle and springing erect, raised his javelin and held it poised, as if about to hurl it at the cowering lads. The next moment, the Indians' canoe grated against the cayuca and two of the savages leaped into the smaller craft and, seizing the boys, rapidly bound them hand and foot with strong

strips of bark. Then, trussed like spitted fowls, the two terrorized boys were tossed carelessly into the canoe and a moment later were being paddled back towards the Indian village and captivity.

Too overwhelmed with their misfortune to speak, the two prisoners lay silent and motionless in the canoe for some time; but at last Rob's anger overcame his fright. "The de'ils!" he exclaimed. "The painted de'ils! Hoot, mon, but we're addle pated ninnies, lad! Why didna we shoot afore they clappet hands on us? 'Tis braw lads we be to be took like bairns, wi' never a squeak o' reeseestance."

"'Twould only have made things worse," moaned Fred. "We might have shot them, but if we hadn't killed all three the first shot they'd have killed us. Besides, I never thought of it; 'twas all so sudden."

"Aye," agreed the other. "No more did I, laddie; but 'twould ha' been no worse bein' killed in yon cayuca than bein' murdered slow-like an' havin' our feet sliced."

"Do you think they *will* kill us or torture us?" cried Fred.

Rob gave a mirthless laugh. "Are ye thinkin' 'tis for our diversion they're takin' us back?" he asked, sarcastically. "Do we no mind how gentle they are or the conseederation they have for our comfort? Gang awa', Fred! An' we live to see

anither nicht 'twill be no short o' a meeracle!"

"And we haven't even our guns, now!" cried Fred.

"Weel, we still ha' cartridges, ye ken," said Rob. "It might be worse, lad; it might be worse."

But despite his words, neither of the boys could see anything to hope for in their desperate plight.

Presently the canoe reached the village landing-place; the boys' feet were unbound and, closely guarded by the Indians, they were marched along the trail towards the Mogollon village.

The place seemed strangely deserted and not a full-grown man was visible; but the boys gave little heed to this as they were thrown roughly on the floor of their hut and their feet were once more lashed fast. But even bound as they were, an armed Indian remained squatting in the doorway and it was evident that the savages had no intention of letting the captives escape a second time. Throughout the night the two boys lay upon the bare earth floor of the hut, suffering agonies from the myriads of ants which crawled over them and which they could not brush away with hands bound fast behind them. Their muscles ached and became numbed, the ants explored their ears, noses and mouths and crawled under their garments; big cockroaches scampered over them and all the tortured boys could do was to roll about and groan, with eyes closed tight to keep out the ants and in-

sects. At times it seemed as if they would go raving mad and they screamed aloud, but the savage at their doorway gave not the slightest heed and never so much as turned his head at their agonized cries.

But at daybreak most of the insects sought their hiding places and presently their guard rose, and, calling to someone near at hand, he entered the hut and untied the boys' hands. A moment later a woman appeared with a huge calabash of stew and a loaf of coarse corn bread, but the captives' hands were so swollen and numb from their bonds that it was some time before they could eat. So utterly worn and exhausted were the boys from their sufferings that as soon as they had eaten they flung themselves into the hammocks and instantly fell asleep and scarcely opened their heavy eyes, even when the Indian guard again bound their swollen wrists. It was late in the afternoon when, at last, they were aroused by loud shouts and cries, and, painfully raising themselves, looked from their doorway upon a strange sight. The open area of sand, which stretched from their hut to the council house a hundred yards distant, was fairly swarming with Indians, all painted hideously, all with their long, black hair streaming down their backs, all carrying weapons in their hands, and all dancing and prancing about and yelling fiendishly. But the boys scarce noticed

these, for all their attention was centered on a group of figures in the center of the dancing, screaming circle of Mogollones; a pitiful knot of bound and bleeding prisoners,—men, women and children,—who stood silent and defiant while their captors howled about and ever and anon raised their spears threateningly. That the captives were Indians was evident, for they were nude, save for gaudy cotton cloths wrapped about their loins; there were strings of teeth and claws about their necks and their hair was long and fell loosely about their shoulders. But no second glance was needed to know they were of totally different stock from their captors, for while they were painted almost as hideously as the Mogollones, yet, where not covered with pigment, their skins were pale and scarce darker than the tanned faces of the two boys.

"Why, they're white!" exclaimed Fred. "Rob, they're white Indians!"

"Hoot, laddie, ye're richt!" cried Rob. "An' yon de'ils ha' taken them prisoners like oursel's! Puir lads!"

The sun had now set and darkness was descending with tropic suddenness, but a moment later a huge fire was kindled near the council house and by its weird, red glare the boys saw the fat old chief seated on his stool, with the group of Mogollones seated around him. Then, as the two lads

watched, they saw one of the light-skinned captives seized and dragged into the council house where he was thrown upon the floor before the chief. To their amazement, the boys saw the captives' hands freed and a dark-colored, stick handed to him and suddenly it dawned upon them that the Indian prisoner was being put to the same test as themselves.

"Gosh!" ejaculated Fred. "They think he can make an explosion!"

"Aye, an' I'm minded they'll murder him an' he canna. 'Tis——"

"Oh, they have, Rob!" screamed Fred. "Oh, what fiends!"

The very instant the prisoner had grasped the stick he had whirled it about his head and with a fierce cry brought it crashing down upon the skull of a Mogollon; but scarce had the stricken man crumpled to the earth ere a dozen spears had pierced the breast and throat of the captive.

Rolling the body aside, the Mogollones dragged another of the prisoners before the chief, and tossing him to the floor, drove a lance through his throat.

"Oh, it's too horrible!" cried Fred. "I can't watch it!" and turning his head away the boy buried his face in the hammock.

But Rob, horrified, shivering and nauseated, seemed actually hypnotized and powerless to move

or even close his eyes to shut out the gruesome sight and Fred, despite his utmost efforts found himself compelled to raise his head and watch with fixed gaze and quaking limbs as the Mogollones butchered their helpless victims.

But still worse was to come, for when half a dozen of the prisoners had been slain the remainder were dragged to a nearby hut and the Mogollones gathered about the council house; women moved about, carrying calabashes of fiery palm-wine and to the dull, resonant boom of a tom-tom the Indians commenced to dance. And as they swayed and moved about, between their bodies the boys caught sight of a group of women stooping and working above the corpses and every now and then casting shapeless objects into a huge cauldron placed upon the fire. Then, as the awful truth dawned upon them, the boy's faces grew deadly white beneath their tan and they cried aloud in horror.

"Rob! Oh, Rob!" moaned Fred through chattering teeth. "They're cooking them! They're going to eat them! Oh! Oh!" and flinging himself back in the hammock the boy's strained nerves gave way and he broke into a paroxysm of hysterical sobs.

And Rob, scarcely less affected than his companion, felt the hair tingling on his scalp and he gulped and swallowed hard to restrain an over-

whelming faintness. Then, suddenly and without a word, the Scotch lad slipped from the hammock to the floor and rolled and jerked himself across the threshold of the hut,—from which the guard had long since gone to join his fellows at the feast, —and in the shadows, inch by inch worked his way painfully to a nearby shed where the smoldering remains of a fire still glowed dully in the pitchy darkness. Closer and closer he wiggled, until, at last, his feet were within reach of the gleaming coals. Then, with a sudden kick of his bound legs, he scattered the firebrands about and, rolling to the brightest brand, maneuvered until it was beneath his back and pressing against the taut rope that bound his hands. Gritting his teeth and writhing in agony as the red-hot coal seared the flesh of his wrists, Rob pressed his bonds unflinchingly against the glowing wood until the bark rope parted and his hands were free. Then extinguishing the burning cloth of his garments, he quickly freed his ankles and, gathering up the ropes, scurried rapidly back to the hut. So quickly had it all been accomplished that Fred had not noticed his comrade's absence and was still lying with his face in the hammock.

"Hist, laddie!" cried Rob, shaking his friend's shoulder. " 'Tis free I am, lad! Hoot, mon, we'll no be murdered nor eaten, Fred!"

As he spoke, he rapidly unfastened the knots

of Fred's bonds and, as the latter turned, bewildered and unbelieving, towards Rob, the ropes slipped from his wrists and he was free.

"What, how——" he stuttered, gazing incredulously at his swollen wrists. "Oh, Rob, you're all burned! What *have* you done?"

"Gang awa'!" cried Rob. "'Tis no muckle scorchet I am." And then, in a few rapid words, he told of what he'd done.

"We'll bide a wee," he continued, "wi' the rope wrappet 'round our wrists in case yon de'il jailer comes alang; but I dinna think he'll be mindin' o' us wi' yon feast a gangin' on. Hoot, mon, 'twill no be lang afore the whole clan's drunk as fiddlers fra their wine an' we can gang awa' an' none the wiser!"

"But they'll follow us and catch us again!" objected Fred.

"No, laddie, that, they'll not," replied the other. "'Twas boobies we were afore, but this time we'll leave no canoes for them to follow in. We'll tow them oot o' the grass an' sink them in yon stream an' if the cayuca's naw bashed itself to bits on yon snag we'll ha' our guns again, lad."

There seemed no reason why Rob's plan should not be successful and, greatly cheered at the thought of escape and with renewed confidence, now that they were no longer bound and helpless, the two boys waited impatiently while the canni-

balistic orgy continued. It seemed, however, as if Rob's prophecy that the Indians would drink themselves into a drunken stupor would never come true and for hour after hour the savages gorged and drank and howled while the night reverberated to the deep boom of the big drum. But at last the noise grew less, the beat of the tom-tom was intermittent, the Indians lolled about and ceased to dance, and presently all was silent and not a movement could be seen.

A few minutes more the excited boys waited, and then, feeling sure that no watch was being kept and that the Indians were dead to the world, the two cast aside their bonds and, keeping in the shelter of the darkest shadows, crept from their hut, crossed the open space of sand in safety and dashed down the trail as rapidly as their cut and benumbed ankles would permit. They reached the landing place with no sound of an alarm from the village and a few moments later were in midstream with all the Indians' canoes. But they soon found that Rob's plan to sink the canoes was not easy to accomplish, for despite the fact that they were capsized and filled with water, the buoyant cedar still floated. And at last, abandoning this idea, the boys decided to tow the craft down stream and set them adrift when some distance from the landing. Although to tow the heavy cayucas meant a loss of valuable time, yet the

boys realized that without their craft the Indians could not follow them and they exerted all their strength and paddled with all possible speed until the landing place was half a mile behind. Then, capsizing the canoes, they cut them loose and in the small cayuca they had selected sped swiftly down the river.

Their abandoned canoe was still fast upon the submerged log and their guns were safe within it and, only stopping long enough to recover their weapons, the boys continued on their way. For several hours they paddled with the current, but, strangely enough, there was no sign of the broad, main river. "Where *is* that river?" exclaimed Fred at last. "It didn't seem such a long distance when we came up."

Rob shook his head. "I dinna ken," he replied. "But 'tis somewhere ahead."

For another hour the cayuca slipped silently through the dark forest and then, without warning, the stream widened and the boys found themselves floating on a small lake with its placid surface covered with the broad leaves of giant water-lilies.

"We're lost!" cried Fred. "We never passed this place! Oh, Rob, what *will* we do?"

"Weel, all roads lead to Rome, ye ken," replied Rob philosophically. "An' we follow the current we'll gain the sea sometime, lad."

But to follow the current in the stagnant pond was difficult and for a long time the two paddled slowly about the edges of the lake, seeking for an opening in the forest that hemmed it in or striving to note a current flowing away from the spot! They had almost completed the circuit when, through the labyrinth of tree trunks, they caught a dull-red glow and instantly the two ceased paddling and their faces paled. "It's a fire!" whispered Fred. "There are more Indians here!"

"Aye," murmured Rob. "But they've no seen us, lad. We'll——" but at this moment the canoe was drawn forward by an eddy and before the frightened boys could check their craft a strong current had swept them into a swift-flowing, narrow stream and was carrying them directly towards the blazing fire.

A Strange Meeting

FRANTICALLY the boys strove to regain control of their canoe and at last, when within two hundred yards of the fire, they turned her into a tiny creek where, panting from their exertions and fright, they held to the low-growing branches and waited with fast-beating hearts, momentarily expecting to hear shouts announcing that they had been seen. But no alarm was given although, as they listened, they could hear the sounds of voices from the direction of the fire which was now plainly visible through the trees.

"What *can* we do?" whispered Fred at last. "We can't go back and if we go past the fire they're sure to see us!"

Rob hesitated a moment before replying. "Aye, 'tis out o' the pan an' into the fire," he said. "But 'tis down stream we must gang, lad. Maybe we

can slip by yon savages an' no be seen an' maybe they're but two or three an' if they chase us we can shoot. Hoot, mon, 'tis no use bidin' here like scairt rabbits i' a warren! There's naw current close to shore an' we can creep alang i' the shadow o' the bush an' have a wee bit peep at yon camp. An' maybe they're not Mogollones, Fred; we're a lang ways fra their village."

For a few moments Fred expostulated, for while he usually led in all mad pranks and adventures, he had been so thoroughly terrorized and wrought up by his awful experiences and his sufferings that he had completely lost his usual initiative and looked to his companion for everything. And so, as Rob argued that it was their only chance, he finally consented and carefully working the cayuca from its hiding place, and keeping the craft close to the brush-grown shore where there was slack water, the boys slowly and cautiously approached the broad band of ruddy light upon the surface of the river.

And then, as they peered intently through the bushes towards the fire, Rob gasped and seizing a low limb held the cayuca motionless, while Fred choked back a stifled cry. Beside the fire squatted two huge Mogollones and just beyond, and bound fast to a tree, was a light-skinned captive. "It's another white Indian!" whispered Fred. "And they're going to kill and eat him!"

"Aye, puir lad!" replied Rob. "But he's no Indian! Dinna ye see he's wearin' breeks, lad? Yon's a white man, Fred!"

"Gosh, you're right!" exclaimed Fred in subdued tones. "Oh, Rob, can't we do something? Can't we shoot those fiends from here?"

"An' supposin' we dinna kill them?" asked Rob. "An' dinna ye see yon captive's in range o' our guns, laddie? 'Twould be little comfort to riddle his skin wi' bullets to kill yon de'ils."

"But we *must* do something," insisted Fred. "Perhaps we could sneak around and get a better shot."

Rob shook his head. "If we move fra here we'll ha' no cover and they'll see us first, lad," he declared. "Hoot, mon! I ha' a plan. Hold the boat here, Fred, an' bide a wee. I'm thinkin' I ha' a wee bit o' surprise i' my sleeve."

"Oh, don't take any risks, Rob," begged Fred. "Suppose you were caught or hurt, what would I do?"

"Dinna fear," whispered the other. "'Tis forgettin' your Scout's oath, ye are, laddie dear. Do ye think we'd be gangin' alang an' no take reesks o' helpin' yon puir lad. Gang awa', Fred!"

Thus reproved, Fred sat silent, holding the cayuca in its place, while Rob, stripping off his shoes slipped silently into the water and, noiselessly as an otter, swam slowly down stream. As he reached

the strip of light upon the surface his head sank from Fred's sight, but a moment later the anxious watcher saw his comrade crawl from the water and disappear in the bushes well below the fire.

Patiently he waited, not knowing what wild plan Rob had in mind, and praying that he might succeed.

Meanwhile Rob, having gained the bank below the fire, crawled like a snake through the small growth near the stream and safely gained the more open forest. Then, keeping ever within the black shadows of the trees, he gradually worked his way towards the fire. Nearer and nearer he crept, his heart pounding with excitement, until he was within twenty yards of the tree to which the prisoner was bound. Between him and the captive was an open space, bare of trees and brightly illuminated by the firelight, and Rob's heart sank, for he knew that to cross that bright area meant certain detection by the Indians. But as he flattened himself behind his sheltering tree a falling branch in the forest crashed to earth and instantly the Indians leaped to their feet and with ready weapons turned and gazed in the direction of the sound. But the brief second during which they looked away was enough for Rob and with his utmost speed he dashed across the open space and gained the shelter of a tree close to the prisoner and not a dozen feet from the fire.

Scarcely had he done so, when one of the Indians strode towards the bound man and loosed his bounds, while his companion poised his spear as if to pierce the captive's breast. But ere the spear descended Rob, with a heartfelt, silent prayer for success, had tossed a handful of cartridges into the blazing fire. The next instant the forest echoed to the explosions of the shells; the fire leaped and flew apart, blazing sticks and coals were scattered far and near and with one wild, terrified yell the Mogollones dropped their weapons and fled, panic-stricken, into the forest. Before they had gained the first shadows, Rob had leaped to the prisoner's side and shouting wildly and incoherently to "gang alang!" dashed for the canoe with the other close at his heels.

Fred, who had heard the reports of the shells and had seen the flying firebrands, had guessed what had occurred and was ready, and as the two sprang into the cayuca he shoved it from the bank into mid-stream and the next moment he and Rob were paddling for their lives, for as they glanced towards the fire they saw the two Mogollones racing towards the shore. But as the Indians drew their bows to shoot, the rescued man seized a gun, there was a flash and roar, and the foremost Indian spun like a top and sank to the ground, while his companion turned tail and dashed away.

WITH ONE WILD, TERRIFIED YELL THE MOGOLLONES FLED, PANIC-STRICKEN

"Take thot, yez spahlpeens!" cried the stranger. "Faith, b'yes, 'tis a foine bit o' shootin' iron yez have here!"

"Why, you—you're——" exclaimed Fred.

"Oirish as Pat Murphy's pig!" supplemented the other. "Glory be! Did ye think Oi was a murtherin', haythen Mogollon?" The fellow burst into a hearty laughter.

"No," replied Fred, "we knew you weren't a Mogollon, but we thought at first you were a—a white Indian. But it did kind of surprise me to hear you speak with a brogue, it's so—so unusual down here, you know."

The Irishman fairly roared. "The saints preserve us!" he cried. "Yez took me for a Mygone then! Be jabbers, 'tis little wonder, what with me rags an' nakedness an' all! But faith, 'tis foine to be hearin' the swate music o' Yankee tongues, and by the same token as surprisin' to me as me brogue to yez Oi'm afther thinkin'! Glory be, but oi'm afther forgettin' me manners an' all! Sure 'tis thankin' of yez on me bended knees Oi should be, for savin' of me loife an' lavin' me ears to hear with at all, at all. God bless yez, b'yes; 'twas a foine, brave deed entoirely, an' a shtroke o' ganius into the bargain!"

Rob chuckled. "Hoot, mon!" he exclaimed. "'Twas no muckle an' 'tis rare comfort to ha' anither lad wi' a burr on his tongue."

"Shure thin' 'tis a foine trio we are!" cried the other with a hearty laugh. "A Yankee, a Scootchman an' a Paddy! Saints presarve us! Oi'm afther forgettin' me manners again, 'tis introducin' of meself Oi should be." Throwing back his head the voluble young Irishman roared out:

"Me name is Pat O'Hara, an' Oi've throuble with me ligs,
Me lift one sets me crazy, it is worse than twinty pigs,
Oi'll tell yez all me throubles, an' the raysons ye may sift—
Me roight lig is a daisy; but,—the divvil's in me lift."

Dropping their paddles, the boys fairly screamed with laughter, for the hearty good humor of the irrepressible Irishman was infectious and the sudden reaction from the awful strain they had been under made the boys almost hysterical.

"I'm Fred Wilson," announced Fred as their hilarity subsided. "And this is Rob MacGregor."

"An' fair dyin' o' curiosity to ken how yon Indians came to ha' a braw Irish laddie tied to a tree waitin' to be cooked," declared Rob.

O'Hara laughed. "Shure 'tis a long shtory, b'yes," he replied. "An' the fortunes o' war. 'Twas the Mygones as shtarted it all,—the white Indians as yez call thim. 'Twas a prisoner o' the Mogollones, Oi wuz,—havin' been taken whin, loike the phool Oi wuz Oi attimpted to make frinds o' thim. Thin, one foine day, comes a bunch o' Mygones, an' the divvil of a foine foight there wuz with the Mogollones yellin' and scrachin' an'

me with a foine shillelah in the thick of it, 'till the haythen cannibals wuz beat,—bad cess to thim' —an' the Mygones a-bowin' an' a-schrapin' an' callin' of me chief. Shure 'twas most flatterin' entoirely and plazin' too, for 'twas crazy Oi wuz to shtudy thim. But saints presarve us! 'Twas no aisy job Oi had, phwat with kapin' the peace an' bein' judge an jury, an' king an' medicine man, an' nivver sphakin' a word o' their tongue,—though by the same token Oi wuz shtudyin' it. But they wuz a ristless bunch entoirely an' iverlashtin'ly roamin' an' snoopin' about an' a campin' here an' a campin' there with no shtability at all, at all, till one foine day, begorra, they shtept as swate as yez plase into an ambushcade o' the Mogollones an' betwane the soorprise an sooperior noombers niver wan o' us eschaped,—savin' meself phwat didn't,—for Oi sez to meself, sez Oi, 'Sure, Paddy, me b'ye, 'tis high toime fer yez to be batin' it', sez Oi; an' sphakin' to none o' me intintions, Oi bate it. But, be jabbers, 'twas unlucky Oi wuz entoirily an' as I wuz slapin' swate an' peaceful-loike Oi woke up with two o' the murtherin', haythen fornist me! An' thinkin', beloike, a burrd in the hand worth two in the bush the bastes toid me harrd an' phast an' decoided to dine on me thin an thare, when, by the grace o' God, yez dhropped in on the tay party."

Then, before the boys could speak the narrator

turned to them and, without a trace of brogue, asked: "And now, boys, can you satisfy my curiosity as to how you two happen to be knocking about by yourselves in the interior of Goajira?"

At his words the two boys ceased paddling and stared at the speaker with unbelieving eyes and surprise expressed in every feature.

"Why," exclaimed Fred, "you didn't speak with any brogue at all!"

The Irishman laughed merrily. "Shure 'tis a bit of pleasantry o' moine to sphake with a brogue when I feel particularly light-hearted or mischievous," he replied.

"Weel, I dinna ken as you are the only person who can talk without a burr on his tongue if he wishes!" cried Rob, and all three laughed heartily at the way Rob had turned the tables.

Day was now breaking and O'Hara suggested that they should stop and try to kill some game and have breakfast and as the boys were nearly starved they readily agreed. "You can tell me your story as we eat," said O'Hara; "if you boys will light a fire I'll take a look about something to eat."

Accordingly, the two boys gathered sticks and brush and before the pile was ready to light they heard the report of the gun and a few moments later the Irishman appeared with a fat wild turkey. And as the three sat by their camp fire, broiling

the bird over the coals, the boys related the story of their adventure. O'Hara listened attentively, occasionally uttering ejaculations of "Glory be!" or "Saints presarve us!" and when they mentioned Mr. Grayson and Cabral his eyes twinkled and he shook as with suppressed merriment.

"What *is* it you're laughing at?" asked Fred, interrupting his tale.

"Faith, and isn't it enough to make anyone laugh?" replied O'Hara. "To think of you running into all these adventures through starting out merely to find a certain man! Shure, me b'yes 'tis stringin' me Oi'd think yez wuz if Oi'd met yez anny other sphot but here."

"Well, I suppose it does sound funny," admitted Fred as he continued with his story. Then, when at last he had finished, O'Hara rose and clapped the two boys on their backs.

"Boys," he cried, "you're wonders! You've done things that any man might be proud of and you've had adventures that no one would believe if they were printed." And then, adopting his humorous brogue, he continued: "Be all the saints, me b'yes, ye'll be afther foindin' o' Señor Cabral sez Oi, and 'tis proud he'll be to know yez. Shure 'tis meself that'll be afther ladin' yez to him."

"Gosh!" cried Fred. "Do you know him, or are you just kidding us?"

"Do I know him?" laughed O'Hara. "Do I

know him? Glory be, 'tis me best frind and me worst innemy he is! Saints presarve us, 'twill be a foine sight entoirely to be wid yez when yez sthand fornist him afther the toimes ye've had thrailin' afther him!" The Irishman fairly roared with merriment and laughed till tears came to his mischievous gray eyes.

"What *is* the joke?" cried Fred. "Where is Cabral? Are you sure we can find him?"

"Hoot, mon!" exclaimed Rob, "'tis a muckle serious matter ye ken, an' no time for jokin', sir. But I'm thinkin' 'tis a lang way yet an' we'll naw be countin' our chicks afore they hatch. 'Twill be a wee bit cannier to be gangin' alang and finding o' yon lagoon."

"Faith, and 'tis roight yez are, Sandy!" declared O'Hara. "We're wasting time. Come on, all rivers flow to the sea, you know, and once on the coast we'll have a try for your destroyer."

Once more in the cayuca and speeding down stream, Fred plied the Irishman with questions, but without satisfaction, for laughs and humorous replies in O'Hara's broad brogue were the only responses to his queries and at last he gave it up in despair and talked of other matters. Both boys were curious to learn what had brought their newfound friend into the interior of Goajira, but whenever their questions led in this direction the

Irishman evaded them and turned the conversation into other channels.

But the boys soon found that O'Hara was a most intelligent and highly educated man and possessed a fund of knowledge and information only equaled by Mr. Grayson and as they swept down the river they forgot all their troubles and their worries as listened to his fascinating tales of strange places and stranger people. He told them of the weird "Lake of Death" in Panama; a lonely cairn among the mountains with its shores strewn with the skeletons of birds and animals which had come to drink of its deadly waters. He related the tales of the lost treasure of the Incas and of the "Golden City" of Manoa in Guiana. He repeated Raleigh's accounts of the savage "three-fingered men" and of the Amazons, and told them the story of the "monkey men" and the "Waupena bird" whose haunts were supposed to be Goajira itself.

And so vivid were his descriptions, so well told his narrative, that the boys could scarce believe that many of the things he told them were mere myths and had originated in the imaginative brains of the early explorers.

"Do you really think there is a Golden City and an Eldorado, or three-fingered men?" asked Fred.

"Or monkey men?" added Rob.

"I'm sure I don't know," replied O'Hara with

a laugh. "At one time I should have said 'no, they're pure nonsense'; but the more I see of South America the less I scoff at any tale, no matter how weird or fanciful it may sound. Nine times out of ten I've found the wildest yarns are based on truth and are merely exaggerations,—not pure fables. Take the three-fingered men, for example. Old Raleigh claimed there was a race in Guiana who had two or three claws on each hand and foot in place of fingers and toes, and for centuries everyone laughed at the tale, but within the past few years a tribe has been found, many members of which have hands with but three fingers. As they look upon this deformity with superstitious awe the freaks are usually medicine men. Moreover, the malformation is hereditary and, through intermarriage, has been perpetuated and has become a characteristic of many of the tribe. No doubt Raleigh *did* see, or was told of, these three-fingered Indians, and jumped to the conclusion that every member of the race was the same. Possibly there is equal foundation for the story of the 'monkey men' and other supposedly-fabulous tribes. Even the story of the Golden City may be but a highly colored tale of some place which actually exists."

"Gosh! I'd like to hunt for it," declared Fred, "and see those three-fingered chaps and the monkey men."

"Hoot, mon!" cried Rob. "Haven't you seen enough savages without wanting more? If we get out of here I'll never want to see another."

O'Hara chuckled. "Yes, you will," he asserted. "It's in the blood, boys; once you have tasted adventure you never can get enough. I'll warrant you said just the same thing when those Indians in Costa Rica had you."

"I guess you're right," admitted Rob. "Everything does seem awfully dull and monotonous after being in the bush. Do you know——" Rob ceased abruptly, the splashing of the paddles stopped, the cayuca drifted silently upon the river and the three sat motionless, listening intently. for a strange sound had reached their ears. Another moment and it came again; a low, faint, far-away noise like a single blow upon a huge bass-drum.

"Glory be, 'tis guns!" cried the Irishman.

"Hurrah!" yelled Fred. "Someone's near!"

"Hoot, mon, 'tis far awa'!" declared Rob.

"Shure it's far away," agreed O'Hara. "But 'tis a foine an' wilcome sound entoirely." Then, dropping his brogue, he continued. "Those are reports of heavy guns, boys, and they must be on a ship. We're nearing the sea and there's something going on. Come on, let's paddle for all we're worth!"

"Perhaps they're from a German base," suggested Fred.

"Or from yon destroyer," added Rob.

And then, as the three bent to their paddles, conversation ceased and, thrilling with excitement, they drove the cayuca madly down stream. For hours they sped on and never slackening pace save for a short stop for a hasty meal at noon. And now they were becoming anxious, for no more sounds of firing had reached their ears and they feared the vessel, if vessel it was, had gone and that they would reach the sea only to find it deserted.

Suddenly Fred stopped paddling. "Golly!" he exclaimed. "There were just three shots! Do you remember, Rob, we agreed to fire three shots if we were lost and they were to answer the same way? I'll bet Dad and Mr. Grayson have been rescued and they fired those shots to let us know where they were and when we didn't answer they went off."

"Don't you think that for a moment," said O'Hara. "If they were picked up it must have been by your destroyer friends and you can bank on it that they're not going to steam off as long as there's any chance of finding you boys."

"I suppose that's so," agreed Fred as he resumed paddling. "But just the same, I'll bet they fired those three shots for us."

"If they did they served their purpose," de-

clared the Irishman. "Look, boys! We've left the hills behind and we're close to the coast."

"An' how do ye ken that?" asked Rob.

"By the birds and vegetation," replied O'Hara, and as the canoe sped on, he pointed out various trees, bushes and birds which he explained lived only on the low, coastal lands.

Another hour passed, the sun had dropped behind the trees to the west and night was rapidly approaching, when Fred gave a surprised cry and ceased paddling. "Gosh!" he exclaimed. "Look there, Rob! That's where we found the Hun boats!" He pointed to a muddy landing place which still showed the imprints of many feet.

"Hoot, mon, you're right!" cried Rob.

O'Hara gave a low whistle. "Glory be!" he ejaculated. "Will wonders never cease? Hold on, boys," he continued. "Let's have a look up that trail! Your people may be there yet."

"But the Huns may catch us," objected Fred.

"Gang awa'; they're no so bad as yon Mogollones," declared Rob, to whom the spirit of adventure appealed.

"We can still run for the canoe, just as you did before," chuckled the Irishman, and, as he spoke, the cayuca slid softly into the mud.

O'Hara looked intently at the soft earth of the landing place. "There has been a crowd here

recently," he announced, "and all going towards the river and none going back. If they didn't have boats they must have swum. Shure if it's a riddle I give it up! Come on, boys!"

Silently as ghosts, the three crept along the pathway with the Irishman in the lead. Suddenly he stopped and pointed to the path, already indistinct in the twilight. "Blood!" he announced. "There's something doing here!"

Again they moved forward and, fifty yards further on, O'Hara again halted and instantly dodged behind a tree. "Hist!" he whispered. "Look yonder!"

Trembling with suppressed excitement, the boys peered intently through the bushes and there, not one hundred feet distant, saw a high fence or wall of stout logs. For a moment they stared, speechless, and then Fred, glancing up, caught the flutter of a flag against the darkening sky. The next second his companions were startled by his wild yell. "Hurrah!" he screamed. "There's our flag! They're Americans!" And with the words he dashed madly towards the stockade.

"Saints presarve us!" cried the Irishman. "Is the lad mad?" and, closely followed by Rob, he sprinted after Fred, and then he, too, caught sight of the fluttering bunting and yelled like a maniac.

But as they reached the entrance to the stockade they halted dumfounded. Within there was no

sign of life but instead a scene of desolation and ruin. A broken rapid-fire gun lay among a mass of splintered timbers with its muzzle pointing skyward; a shattered spar hung in a tangle of wires from the flag's staff and, beyond was a confused mass of charred boards and warped, bent, corrugated iron which once had been a building.

Stooping, O'Hara picked up a blood-stained German cap. "Be jabbers, 'tis a sorry day for the Huns!" he exclaimed. "Your friends have been treatin' 'em rough all right."

"That must have been the firing we heard," declared Fred. "Hurrah! The destroyer must be near! Come on, let's get out of here!"

Turning, the three hurried as rapidly as darkness would permit, along the trail and pushing the cayuca from the shore headed with light hearts towards the lagoon.

Long before they gained the open water it was pitch dark and nothing was visible upon the vast black expanse.

"Oh, they've gone!" cried Fred dejectedly. "We're too late!"

"Hoot, mon!" exclaimed Rob. "You didna think yon destroyer'd be a lyin' here, did you?"

"She's probably outside and sent a boat's crew ashore," declared O'Hara. "Do you boys know where the entrance to this lagoon is?"

But the boys knew as little of this as the Irish-

man himself and their only recourse was to paddle around the edge of the mangroves searching for a channel. Luck, however, was with them and they had gone scarce five hundred yards when O'Hara discovered a break in the trees and with rapid strokes of the paddles the canoe was driven along the winding waterway.

"Hurrah, there are lights!" shouted Fred, a moment later. "And they're on a boat!"

Ahead, like a vast, black plain, stretched open water and hung in mid-air above it, and with their reflections like long paths of fire upon the polished surface of the lagoon. twinkled the lights of a ship.

* * * * * *

Mr. Wilson and the scientist were seated upon the deck of the destroyer with Lieutenant Benson, discussing plans for the search the next day and suggesting theories as to the boys' whereabouts. Suddenly the commander sprang up. "That sounds like a boat!" he exclaimed as the faint sounds of splashing water floated to them across the silent lagoon. Scarcely had he finished speaking when a sharp challenge rang out from the sentry by the gangway.

"Frinds!" came an answering cry from the blackness. "And Americans!" supplemented another voice.

"By Jove!" cried Mr. Wilson, leaping up and

rushing to the rail. "It's the boys; thank God!"

"Gad!" ejaculated the scientist. "And they've company! That brogue was not Rob's."

"Holy mackerel!" exclaimed the commander. "Speak of angels——"

The next instant the cayuca was alongside and the three occupants scrambled up the gangway to the deck, and Fred rushed to his father's arms.

As O'Hara stepped onto the deck Mr. Grayson peered at him with a puzzled frown and then, with a glad cry, sprang forward and wrung his hand. "Great Scott, Cabral!" he cried. "Where in thunder did *you* drop from?"

"From a three where the murtherin' Mogollones wuz afther tyin' me until the sphalpeens wuz riddy fer their avenin' male wit me fer the roast j'int. Glory be! 'Tis lookin' foine yez are, Mr. Grrayson!"

As the scientist uttered the name "Cabral," the two boys had whirled about and now both they and Mr. Wilson stood gazing with such mystified, puzzled expressions on their faces that both the Irishman and Mr. Grayson burst into hearty laughter.

"Why, you—you know him!" cried Fred. "And you—you called him Cabral! I—I don't understand!"

"Hoot, mon!" exclaimed Rob. "Ha' we gone daffy?"

Mr. Grayson strove to suppress his merriment. "Tell them, Pat!" he gasped.

"Señor Don Pedro Esquival Cabral, at your service!" cried the Irishman, making a low bow and with a broad grin on his unshaven face.

"But you said you were Pat O'Hara," insisted Fred, still too mystified to realize that the long-sought object of their search stood before him.

"Saints presarve us, an' so Oi did!" replied the other. "An' by the same token, 'twas truth Oi wuz afther tellin' yez. 'Tis aither wan yez fancy, lad. Faith, a rose by anny other name would smhell as swate. Shure an' 'twas but a joke Oi wuz afther playin' on yez!"

"Come, come, Grayson!" cried Mr. Wilson. "What *does* all this mean? Let's have an explanation."

"First let me introduce my old friend and colleague, Señor Cabral," laughed the scientist.

"Or Misther O'Hara," added the Irishman.

"Then I'm to understand that you're the gentleman we've been searching for," said Mr. Wilson as he shook hands with the newcomer. "I'm glad to know you Mr.—er—Cabral. But I'm still at a loss to understand how it is that you are, er—pardon me, apparently Irish and—er—also claim the name of O'Hara."

Cabral gave a merry laugh. "Oh, it's very simple," he replied, omitting his assumed brogue.

"My father was one of Emmet's followers and sought safety and freedom in Venezuela, where he married the daughter of a Spanish gentleman named Cabral. To please both sides of the family, I was christened Pedro Esquival Patrick O'Hara Cabral, and as I believe that in Rome one should do as the Romans do, I omit my Hibernian names except when my Irish blood has the upper hand, when Oi phuts it on with me brogue, an' faith, sor, ye'll no be denyin' as 'tis a foine fit entoirely, sor."

Mr. Wilson shook with laughter. "It's worth all we've gone through just to hear you," he declared, slapping O'Hara on the shoulders.

"Then you really are Cabral!" cried the boys. "Hurrah, we did find him after all!"

"And in the nick of time," declared the Irishman. "Half an hour later and half of me would have been inside of two hungry Indians!"

"I'll warrant you're hungry now!" exclaimed the commander. "I vote we let these three prodigals wash up and change and then they can spin the whole yarn while we're at chow."

"Hivin bless yez fer thim worrds!" cried O'Hara. "But 'tis a holy shtone yez'll be afther needin' to clane me!"

"Hoot, mon, I'm fair famished!" declared Rob.

Half an hour later, as they crowded about the table with its spotless linen and gleaming silver spread under the awnings and were served by the

soft-footed Jap steward, they could scarce believe that all they had been through was not a dream or that almost within stone's throw was the battered sunken U-boat, while two days' journey inland dwelt savages who fed on human flesh. And as they ate, the boys related the stories of their adventures and in turn listened to the others' accounts of their experiences with the Germans.

"I can't believe it's all happened in a week," declared Fred. "It seems ages ago since we found the schooner blown up and the dead crew on the beach."

"Well, you boys *have* been going it some," cried Lieutenant Benson. "That sort of thing is too fast for my pace. Talk about chasing subs or convoying through the danger zone! And you two take it all like a regular lark."

"I expect they're born to be hung," laughed Mr. Grayson.

"More likely a case of 'fools rush in', you know," said Mr. Wilson.

"Oh, you can't get our nannies," chuckled Rob. "You've got to admit *we* found Cabral."

"And now we can go back to Panama and start on Tisingal," said Fred.

"Has Mr. Cabral or,—er—O'Hara, consented?" asked Mr. Wilson with a wink.

"No—o," replied Fred suddenly taken aback. "But you will, won't you, Mr. O'Hara?"

"Faith an' 'tis that same Oi'll be afther doin'," laughed the Irishman. "It's the least I can do to repay you boys for saving my life. But I'm afraid we'll have to take another little trip first."

"Another trip?" cried Rob. "Hoot, man, haven't ye had enough?"

"All my papers are at my home in Caracas," explained O'Hara. "I must get them before I can transfer them to you."

"Oh, dear!" sighed Fred. "Then we'll have to go clear back and start all over again!"

"Perhaps you can prevail upon Lieutenant Benson to land us in La Guaira," suggested the scientist. "It's nearer than Colon."

"Oh, will you?" cried Fred, turning towards the young commander.

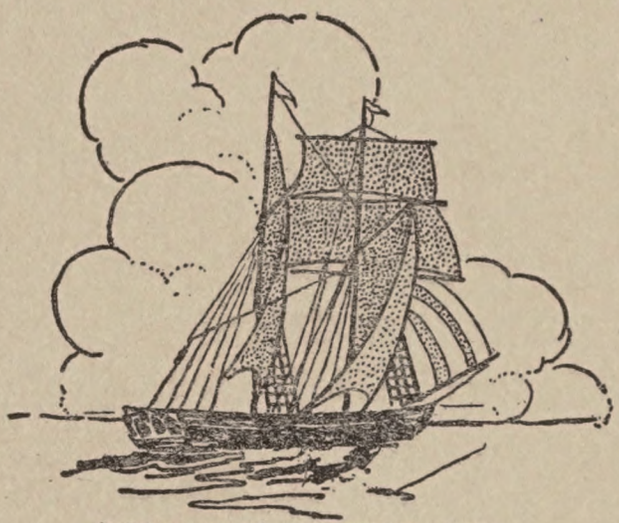
But before he could reply there was the rattle and roar of the anchor winch, bells clanged and, the next moment the little craft throbbed to the churn of her powerful screws.

"Why, we're off!" cried Fred. "Where are we going?"

"Next port of call, La Guaira," chuckled the commander.

"Hurrah!" cried the boys in unison.

"Glory be!" exclaimed Cabral.



THE END

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